ROY BLAKELEY'S ADVENTURES in CAMP

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

1927

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"LET GO, I'VE GOT HIM!"

Roy Blakeley's Adventures in Camp. *Frontispiece* (*Page* 94)

ROY BLAKELEY'S
ADVENTURES IN CAMP

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

AUTHOR OF

ROY BLAKELEY, TOM SLADE, BOY SCOUT,
TOM SLADE AT TEMPLE CAMP, TOM
SLADE WITH THE COLORS, ETC.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Tells You How We Got Started	1
II.	Tells You How I Had a Visitor	9
III.	Tells How I Made a Promise	15
IV.	Tells About the Paper I Found	27
V.	Tells About Skinny's Merit Badge	32
VI.	Tells How Skinny and I Got Together	38
VII.	Tells About My Merit Badge	44
VIII.	Tells About Our Trip Up the Hudson	50
IX.	Tells About Skinny's Swimming Lesson	56
X.	Tells About Skinny and the Elks	62
XI.	Tells You How to Get to Temple Camp	69
XII.	Tells All About Our Row on Black Lake	74
XIII.	Tells About the Strange Campers	82
XIV.	Tells About the Storm on Black Lake	86
XV.	Tells About an Accident	92
XVI.	Tells About Skinny's Absence	100
XVII.	Tells About Camp-Fire and Skinny	105
XVIII.	Tells About My Talk with Bert Winton	110
XIX.	Tells About a Visit from Across the Lake	115

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	Tells About the Loss of Some Money	121
XXI.	Tells About My Talk with Mr. Ellsworth	128
XXII.	Tells About How I Visited the Ohio Troop Cabin	131
XXIII.	Tells About How I Did a Good Turn	139
XXIV.	Tells About How I Told a Secret	145
XXV.	Tells About the Letter We Wrote	153
XXVI.	Tells About Geography and All That Kind of Stuff	158
XXVII.	Tells About How We Tried to Stop It Raining	166
XXVIII.	Tells About How Dame Nature Changed Her Mind	172
XXIX.	Tells About How We Looked Into the Pit	179
XXX.	Tells About How Tigers Leap	182
XXXI.	Tells About the Old Passageway	185
XXXII.	Tells About What I Discovered in Rebel's Cave	191
XXXIII.	Tells About How Westy and I Waited	198
XXXIV.	Tells About the Strange Figure	203
XXXV.	Tells About a New Camp	207
XXXVI.	Tells About What Bert Told Me	211
XXXVII.	Tells About How I Visited Camp McCord	216
XXXVIII.	Tells About the Scout Pace	220
XXXIX.	Tells About How Camp McCord Didn't Strike Its Colors	226

ROY BLAKELEY'S ADVENTURES IN CAMP

CHAPTER I

TELLS YOU HOW WE GOT STARTED

MAYBE you fellows will remember about how I was telling you that our troop had a house-boat that was loaned to us for the summer, by a man that lives out our way. He said we could fix it up and use it to go to Templé Camp in. It was a peach of a boat and took the hills fine—that's what we said just to jolly Pee-wee Harris, who is in our troop. He's awfully easy to jolly, but he doesn't stay mad long, that's one good thing about him.

But one trouble, that boat didn't have any power, and it wouldn't even drift right on account of being almost square. Westy Martin said it was on the square, all right. He's a crazy kid, that fellow is. Anyway, the boat didn't have any power. Our scoutmaster, Mr. Ellsworth, said it didn't even have any will power. We couldn't even pole it.

When we first got it, it was way up a creek in the marshes and Mr. Donnelle (he's the man that owned it) took us there and showed it to us. Just as we were coming near it, a fellow jumped out of it and ran away through the marshes. We said he must be a tramp, because he was all ragged. Anyway, he acted as if he was scared, that was one sure thing.

"We should worry about him, anyway," I said; and Mr. Donnelle said he was gone and that was the end of him.

But, believe me, that wasn't the end of him. That was only the beginning of him. I didn't say anything more about him before, because I didn't know, but believe me, that fellow was—what do you call it—you know—*destined*—to cause a lot of trouble in our young lives. That sounds like a regular author, hey? *Destined.*

When we began fixing the boat up, we found that one of the lockers was locked with a padlock and as long as the boat didn't belong to us, we didn't break it open, especially because there were plenty of lockers besides that one. I bet you'd like to know what was in that locker. But you're not going to find that out yet, so there's no

use asking. All the time we thought Mr. Donnelle had the key to it. But, oh, just you wait.

Well, after we got it all fixed up, we couldn't decide how we'd get it down into the bay and then up the Hudson to Catskill Landing. That's where you have to go to get to Temple Camp. Temple Camp is a great big scout camp and it's right on the shore of Black Lake—oh, it's peachy. You'll see it, all right, and you'll see Jeb Rushmore—he's camp manager. He used to be a trapper out west. You'll see us all around campfire—you wait. Mr. Ellsworth says this story is all right so far, only to go on about the boat. Gee, I'll go faster than the boat did, that's one sure thing, leave it to me. But after we got down into the Hudson we went fast, all right. Let's see where was I?

Oh, yes, we were wondering how we'd get to camp in it because we didn't have much money in our troop, on account of being broke. Poor, but honest, hey? And it costs a lot of money to be towed and an engine would cost a hundred and fifty dollars. Nix on the engine, you can bet. But, oh, boy, there's one thing Mr. Ellsworth said and it's true, I've got to admit that. He said that good turns are good investments—he says they pay a

hundred percent. That's even better than Liberty Bonds. You don't get it back in money, but you get it back in fun—what's the difference?

Well, we did a good turn, and oh, believe me, there was *some* come back!

One day a tug came up our river on its way up to North Bridgeboro. That's where the mill is. And there wasn't anybody there to open the bridge so it could get through. Oh, wasn't that old tug captain mad! He kept whistling and whistling and saying things about the river being an old mud hole, and how he'd never get down the bay again, unless he could get through and come down on the full tide. Oh, boy, but he was wild.

When we told him that old Uncle Jimmy, the bridge tender, had sneaked away to a Grand Army Convention, he kind of cooled down on account of being an old veteran himself, and then some of us fellows fished up an old key-bar that had been lost in the river and opened the bridge with it. That's what they call the thing you open the bridge with—a key-bar. It's like a crow-bar only different.

I'm not saying that was so much of a good turn, except it was turning the bridge around and Connie Bennett said that was a good turn. He's the

troop cut-up. Anyway, old Captain Savage took me up to North Bridgeboro with him and first I was kind of scared of him, because he had a big red face and he was awful gruff. But wait till you hear about the fun we had with him when we landed and took a peek at Peekskill. Oh, boy!

Then he said how he liked the way we stood up for Uncle Jimmy, and I guess besides he was glad about me diving and getting the key-bar, but anyway, that was easy. So he said he was going to tow us up as far as Poughkeepsie the next Saturday, and that if we refused on account of scouts not being willing to accept anything for a service, he'd make a lot of trouble for Uncle Jimmy, because he was away. He was only fooling when he said that. Maybe you won't like him in the beginning, but you'll get to like him pretty soon.

So that's how we got it all fixed to go to camp, or part of the way anyway, in the house-boat. And, believe me, we had some trip, and that's mostly what I'm going to tell you all about. Talk about fun!

On Saturday morning all of the troop came down to the house-boat ready for the trip, and oh, you ought to have seen Skinny McCord. He's a little fellow that lives down in the poor part of

town, and he was a new member. His mother is poor and she goes out washing, and Skinny was sick and his clothes were all in rags, and even he didn't have any shoes and stockings. But, anyway, he did me a good turn and so Westy Martin and I got him into the troop, and we presented him to the Elk Patrol, because they had a vacant place on account of Tom Slade being away in France. So now you know about Skinny and you'll find out a lot more about him, too.

Before Saturday came, Mr. Ellsworth made a bargain with Sandy Grober to tow us down into the Kill Von Kull—that's near Staten Island, you know. Sandy has a boat with a heavy duty motor in it, and he said he'd do the job for ten dollars, because, anyway, he'd go to Princess Bay fishing. Our troop was broke and we couldn't spare the money, because we needed all we had for eats and things. So this is the way we fixed it.

Mr. Ellsworth gave Sandy the ten dollars and then each one of the patrol leaders gave Mr. Ellsworth a note saying his patrol would pay back two dollars and a half as soon as they earned it. That would make seven dollars and a half, and Mr. Ellsworth said he would pay the other two

fifty himself, so you see it was all divided up even between the patrols and the scoutmaster.

Believe me, we had some fun earning that money, especially the Raving Ravens—that's the Raven Patrol, you know.

We started early Saturday morning, and we knew just where we had to go, because we had a letter from Captain Savage, saying that we should wait in the anchorage off St. George at Staten Island, until he came and got us. He said maybe it would be Sunday night or maybe Monday morning, but anyway, just to ride on our anchor till he came.

We didn't have any adventures going down our river and I won't bother telling you about it, because it would only be slow. Gee, williger, a story that's being towed against the tide wouldn't have much action, would it? I bet you'd skip. So it's better for *me* to skip than for *you,* hey?

But anyway, on the way down we got the boat all straightened out inside and decided just how we'd sleep. Two patrols would sleep in the two rooms and one patrol on deck under the awning, and we decided we'd take turns that way, so each patrol would get some sleeping outdoors.

We didn't get to the Kill Von Kull till about

five o'clock and I guess it was about six o'clock when we got to St. George. Oh, but there are some peachy boats in the anchorage there—regular yachts and big cabin cruisers. And that's where our adventures began, you can bet. Do you like mysteries? Gee, that's one thing I'm crazy about —mysteries—mysteries and pineapple sodas. Oh, Oh!

Then Sandy left us and went off to catch cash-on-delivery fish—that's COD fish. Oh, boy, but it was fine rocking away out there. Pretty soon I got supper because I'm cook. I know how to make flapjacks and hunters' stew, and a lot of things. After supper the fellows decided to go ashore to St. George and get some sodas and take in a movie show. I said I'd stay on the house-boat because I had to write up the troop-book. Maybe I forgot to tell you that I'm troop historian. Most of the things in this story are out of our troop book.

You'd better not skip the next chapter, because something is going to happen.

CHAPTER II

TELLS YOU HOW I HAD A VISITOR

We weren't anchored very far from shore, so it didn't take long for all the troop to row over, even though we only had one small boat. Mr. Ellsworth went with them so he could look after Skinny.

As soon as I had finished clearing up after supper, I got out the troop book and began writing it up. I was behind about two weeks with it and so I had about ten pages to do. Oh, but it was dandy sitting there on the deck with my feet up on the railing, writing. I mean I was writing with my hand. Pretty soon it began getting dark and I could see the lights coming out on all the different boats just like stars. It's kind of fun being alone sometimes. I could see all the lights in the town, too, but what did I care? I said I'd rather be alone where I was. Pretty soon it was too dark to write and so I just sat there thinking, Maybe you think it's no fun just thinking. But I was thinking how pretty soon we'd be hiking

up from Catskill Landing to Black Lake, and how I'd see Jeb Rushmore, and how I'd take a hike and find out if the robin's nest was just where it was last year. That robin is a member of our patrol —he's an honorary member.

All of a sudden I saw it was pitch dark and I couldn't see any boats at all, only lights, moving a little on account of the boats rocking.

In a little while I heard oars splashing and the sound seemed to be coming nearer and nearer, so I knew it was the first boat-load of fellows coming back. I thought it was awful soon for them to be getting back. It seemed funny that they weren't talking, especially if it was the Raving Ravens (that's what we call the Raven Patrol) because Pee-wee Harris would be sure to be running on high. That's the way he always does, especially coming home from the movies. And if it was the Elk Patrol I'd be sure to hear Bert McAlpin because he's a human victrola record.

Pretty soon I could make out a black spot coming nearer and then I knew for sure it was headed for the house-boat. But there wasn't any sound except the splashing of the oars and I thought that was mighty funny. In a couple of minutes the boat came alongside and I heard someone say,

"Pst," very quiet like. I went and looked over the rail and there I saw a fellow all alone in a rowboat. I couldn't see him very well, but I could see he had on an old hat and was pretty shabby.

Then he sort of whispered, "Anybody up there, Skeezeks?"

I told him no, and asked him who he was and what he wanted, but he didn't say anything, only tied his boat, and climbed up over the rail. Then I could see him better by the light shining through the cabin window, and his clothes were all ragged and greasy. He looked pretty tough, but one thing, anyway, he smiled an awful nice kind of a smile and hit me a whack on the shoulder and said: "Don't get excited, Skeezeks; you're all right and I won't hurt you. How are you, anyway?"

I told him I was very well, but I'd like for him please to tell me who he was, so I'd know.

Then he gave me another push, and I don't know, there was something about him that kind of made me like him, and I wasn't scared of him at all.

"Don't you know who I am?" he said.

"I kind of think maybe you're the fellow that jumped out of this boat and ran away, when it was

up the creek near Little Valley. You look kind of like him."

"Right the first time," he said, "and I bet you're a bully little scout. What do you say?" Then he looked out over the water to be sure nobody was coming.

"I'm a first class scout, and I've got nine merit badges, and I'm a patrol leader," I told him. "Anyway I'd like to know what you want here."

"Patrol leader! No!" he said, and I could see he was only trying to get on the right side of me, and that he didn't know what a patrol leader is at all.

"Can patrol leaders keep secrets?" he said.

I told him if it was a good secret, they could. Then he hit me a good whack on the shoulder, and he winked at me awful funny and said:

They are fools who go and tell
Wisely has the poet sung.
Man may hold all sorts of jobs
If he'll only hold his tongue.

"Are you a tramp?" I asked him.

"A tramp!" he said, "that's pretty good. I dare say I look like one."

Then he jumped up on the railing and began laughing so hard I was afraid he'd fall backwards into the water. I told him he'd better look out,

but he only laughed more, and said I was a great kid. Then all of a sudden he happened to think and he looked around to see if anyone was coming. Then he said,

"Are you game to help me in a dark plot?"

Gee, I didn't know what to tell him. "It depends upon how dark it is," I said. Because, jiminy, I wanted to be careful and watch my step. But that only made him laugh a lot. Then he said,

"Well, it isn't exactly a black plot, but it's a kind of a dark brown."

"One thing sure," I said, "you're not a tramp, I know that—I can tell."

"You're a wise little gazabo," he said. "Would you really like to know who I am?"

I told him sure I would.

"Do you think I look like a tramp?" he asked me.

"I think you kind of look like one," I said; "but you don't act like one, and you don't laugh like one."

"I've got blamed little reason to laugh," he said, "because I'm in Dutch, and you've got to do me a good turn. Will you?"

"Good turns are our middle names," I told him,

"but anyway, I'd like to know who you are—that's sure."

Then he said, "I'm Lieutenant Donnelle, Mr. Donnelle's son. And I guess I had a right to run away from the boat, didn't I?"

"G-o-o-d night!" I said.

CHAPTER III

TELLS HOW I MADE A PROMISE

THEN he said, "Were you one of the kids who were coming along with my father when I jumped out of the boat?" And I told him yes. Then he said, "You don't think he saw me, do you?"

I said, "Yes, he saw you, but I guess he didn't know who you were, he didn't see your face, that's sure."

"Thank goodness for that," he said, "because I've caused the old gent a lot of trouble."

"Anyway," I told him, "I don't see why you don't wear your uniform. Gee, if I had a lieutenant's uniform you bet I'd wear it."

"Would you?" he said, and he began to laugh. Then he said, "Well, now, let's sit down here on this bench and I'll tell you what *you're* going to do, and then I'll tell you what *I'm* going to do, and we'll have to be quick about it." Then he looked out over the water and listened and as soon as he was sure nobody was coming, he put his arm over my shoulder and made me sit down on the

bench beside him. I have to admit I kind of liked that fellow, even though I kind of thought he was, you know, wild, sort of. It seemed as if he was the kind of a fellow to have a lot of adventures and to be reckless and all that.

"Maybe you can tell me what you're going to do," I told him, "but you can't tell me what *I'm* going to do—that's one sure thing."

"Oh, yes I can," he said, "because you're a bully kid and you're an A-1 sport, and you and I are going to be pals. What do you say?"

"I can't deny that I like you," I said, "and I bet you've been to a lot of places."

"France, Russia, South America, Panama and Montclair, New Jersey," he said, "and Bronx Park." Gee, I didn't know how to take him, he was so funny.

"Ever been up in an airplane?" he said.

"Cracky, I'd like to," I told him.

"I went from Paris to the Channel in an airplane," he said.

Then he gave me a crack on the back and he put his arm around my shoulder awful nice and friendly like, and it made me kind of proud because I knew him.

"Now, you listen here," he said, "I'm in a

dickens of a fix. You live in Bridgeboro; do you know Jake Holden?"

"Sure I know him, he's a fisherman," I said; "the very same night your father told us we could use this boat I saw him, and the next day I went to try to find him for a certain reason, and he was gone away down the bay after fish. He taught me how to fry eels."

"Get out," he said, "really?"

"Honest, he did," I told him.

"Well, some day I'll show you how to cook bear's meat. There's something you don't know."

"Did you ever cook bear's meat?" I asked him.

"Surest thing you know," he said; "black bears, gray bears, grisly bears—"

"Jiminy," I said.

Then he went on and this is what he told me, keeping his arm around my shoulder and every minute or so listening and looking out over the water. "Here's something you didn't know," he said. Gee, I can remember every word almost, because you bet I listened. A fellow couldn't help listening to him. He said, "When Jake Holden went down the bay, your Uncle Dudley was with him."

I said, "You mean you?"

"I mean *me*," he said. "I was home from Camp Dix on a short leave and was on my way to see the old gent and the rest of the folks, when who should I run plunk into but that old water rat. It was five o'clock in the morning, and I was just taking a hop, skip and a jump off the train. 'Come on down the bay fishing,' he says. 'What, in these togs?' I told him. 'I'll get 'em all greased up and what'll Uncle Sam say?' 'Go home and get some old ones,' he said. ''Gainst the rules,' I said, 'can't be running around in civilized clothes.' 'You should worry about civilized clothes,' he said. 'Go up to your dad's old house-boat in the marshes and get some fishin' duds on—the locker's full of 'em.' 'Thou hast said something,' I told him; 'go and get your old scow ready and I'm with you.' "

Then he hit me a good rap on the shoulder and said, "So you see how it was, kiddo? Instead of going home to hear how handsome I looked, I just beat it up that creek and fished this suit of greasy rags out of one of the lockers. There was a key in the padlock and I just took off my uniform and stuffed it in the locker and beat it over to Little Landing in Bridgeboro."

"You locked the padlock and took the key, didn't you?" I said.

"Righto," he said, "and I thought I'd be back that same night and down to Dix again by morning. See? But instead of that, here I am and blamed near a week gone by and Uncle Sam on the hunt for me. A nice pickle I'm in. What do you say?"

"Gee, I wouldn't want to be you," I said; "anyway, I'm sorry for you. But I don't see why you didn't go back like you said." Then he went over to the railing and looked all around in a hurry.

"I guess they won't be back for an hour yet," I told him; "they went to the movies."

So he came back and sat down beside me again and began talking very excited, as if I was kind of a friend of his, the way he talked. You know what I mean. And, cracky, any fellow would be glad to be a friend of his, that's sure, even if he *was* kind of reckless and—you know.

He said, "I had so many adventures, old top, that I couldn't tell 'em to you. Jakey and I have Robinson Crusoe tearing his hair from jealousy. Kiddo, this last week has been a whole sea story in itself—just one hair's-breadth escape after another. Ever read *Treasure Island?*"

"Did I!" I said.

Then he said, "Well *Treasure Island* is like a

church social compared to what I've been through. Some day I'm going to tell you about it."

I said, "I wish you'd tell me now."

"Some night around the camp-fire I'll tell you," he said. "We were fishing off Sea Gate and the fish just stood on line waiting for a chance to bite. We sold three boatfuls in the one day and whacked up about seventy dollars—what do you think of that? Then we chugged around into Coney for gas and on the way back we got mussed up with the tide and were carried out to sea—banged around for three days, bailing and trying to fry fish on the muffler. On the fourth day we were picked up by a fishing schooner about fifty miles off Rockaway and towed in. I said to Jakey, 'I'm Mike Corby, remember that, and if you give your right name I'll kill you—you've got to protect me,' I said, 'because I'm in bad.' You see how it was, kiddo? I was three days overdue at camp and didn't even have my uniform. I was so tired bailing and standing lookout that when they set us down on the wharf at Rockaway, I could have slept standing on my head. And I've gone without sleep fifty hours at a stretch on the West Front in France—would you believe it?"

"Sure, I believe it," I told him.

"I'll tell you the whole business some day when you and I are on the hike."

I said, "Cracky, you can bet I'd like to go on a hike with you."

"That's what we will," he said, "and we'll swap adventures."

I told him I didn't have any good ones like he had to swap, but anyway, I was glad he got home all right.

"All right!" he said, "you mean all *wrong*. Maybe you saw the accounts in the papers of the two fishermen who were picked up after a *harrowing experience*—Mike Corby and Dan McCann. That was us. I left Jakey down at Rockaway to wait for his engine to be fixed and beat it out to Jersey. *No house-boat!* Was I up in the air? Didn't even dare to go up to the house and ask about it. That rotten little newspaper in Bridgeboro had a big headliner about me disappearing—*'never seen after leaving Camp Dix; whereabouts a mystery'*—that's what it said, *'son of Professor Donnelle.'* What'd you think of that?"

I told him I was mighty sorry for him, and I was, too.

Then he said how he went to New York in those old rags, and tried not to see anybody he

knew and even he hid his face when he saw Mr. Cooper on the train. And then he telephoned out to Bridgeboro and Little Valley and made believe he was somebody else, and said he heard the house-boat was for sale and in that way he found out about his father loaning it to our troop, and how we were probably anchored near St. George at Staten Island. Oh, boy, didn't he hurry up to get there, because he was afraid we might be gone.

So then he waited till night and he was just wondering whether it would be safe to wait till we were all asleep and then sneak onto the boat, when all of a sudden he saw the fellows coming ashore and he got near and listened and he heard them speak about going to the movies, and he heard one fellow say something about how Roy would be sorry he didn't come. And do you want to know what he told me? This is just what he said; he said, "When I heard your name was Roy, I knew you'd be all right—see? Because look at Rob Roy," he said; "wasn't he a bully hero and a good scout and a fellow you could trust with a secret—wasn't he?" That's just what he said. "You take a fellow named Roy," he said, "and you'll always find him true and loyal." He said there was a fellow named Roy on the West Front

and he gave up his life before he'd tell on a comrade.

Then he said, "You see how it is with me, Skeezeks, I'm in a peck of trouble and I've got to get those army duds on and toddle back to camp as soon as I can get there and face the music. I've got to make an excuse—I've got to get that blamed uniform pressed somehow—I suppose it's creased from the dampness in that locker. I've got to straighten matters out if I can. I just managed to save my life, and by heck, I'll be lucky if I can just save my honor and that's the plain truth."

"So you see I've got a lot to do," he said, "and you've got just the one thing to do, and that's a cinch. It's to keep your mouth shut—see? Suppose the old gent knew about this. Suppose my sister knew I was within a quarter of a mile of the house and didn't go to see them. You know what girls are."

I told him, "Sure, because I've got two sisters. And I bet they'd like you, too. I bet they'd say you were good looking." Then he began to laugh and he said, "Well, I bet I'd like them too, if they're anything like you. So now will you keep your mouth shut? Ever hear of the scouts' oath? The Indian scouts' oath, I mean—loyalty for bet-

ter or worser? Don't say I was here. Don't say you know anything about me. Keep your mouth shut. If my name should be mentioned, keep still. You don't know anything. Nobody was here, see?"

I said, "Suppose Mr. Ellsworth or somebody should ask me?"

"Who's going to ask you?" he said; "you say nothing and they'll say nothing. I fought for my country, kiddo, and I've got two wounds. You don't want to spoil it all for me now, do you?"

I said, "I bet you're brave, anyhow."

"I'd rather face two German divisions than what I've got to face to-morrow," he said; "but if I know it's all right at this end, I won't worry. Are you straight?"

"I wouldn't tell," I told him; "cracky, why should *I* tell? And I can see you've got a lot of trouble and you're not exactly all to blame, anyway. Only I hope I'll see you again sometime because, anyway, whatever you did I kind of like you. It's one of our laws that a fellow has to be loyal. Only sometime will you tell me some of the things you did—I mean your adventures?"

"I'll tell you all about the jungles and the man-eating apes down in Central America," he said.

So then he went into the cabin in a big hurry and he took the key out of his pocket and he opened the locker and took out his uniform. It was all wrinkled and damp, but anyway, he looked fine in it, you can bet. After he got it all on and fixed right, he stuffed his old clothes into the place and locked it up again. I bet any girl would say he looked fine, that's one thing sure.

Just before he climbed over the railing he put his hand in his pocket and took out some change and he was in such a hurry that he dropped some of it and it went all over the deck. I started to pick it up for him, but he only said, "Never mind, let it go, you can have all you find, and here's a quarter to get a couple of sodas."

I said, "We don't take anything for a service, scouts don't."

"Well, you can have a soda on me, can't you?" he said, trying to make me take the quarter.

"If you want me to be loyal to you, I have to be loyal if I make a promise, don't I?" I said.

He said, "What promise?"

And I said, "I can't take anything for a service."

Then he hit me a rap on the shoulder and laughed and he punched me in the chest, not hard,

only kind of as if to show me that he liked me. Then he said, "Bully for you, kiddo, you're one little trump." Then, all of a sudden he was gone.

Sometimes you can't tell just why you like a fellow, but, anyway, I liked him just the same.

CHAPTER IV

TELLS ABOUT THE PAPER I FOUND

ONE thing, I bet it was Pee-wee Harris that the lieutenant heard talking, while he was hiding on shore. Anyway, it was Pee-wee that I heard first when they were on their way back—that's sure. You know how plain you can hear voices on the water. And believe me, before those fellows were half way out I knew all about the bandit of Red Hallow. That was the fellow in the movies, I suppose, and he must have been some bandit, because he saved a school teacher from about twenty other bandits, and shot them all. I guess everybody was shooting pistols at everybody else, like they mostly do in the movies. Pee-wee was sticking up for the poor school teacher, and it made me laugh because he hasn't got much use for school teachers on account of they're always keeping him in for talking. Anyway, what fun is there in everybody shooting pistols at each other. Me for stalking, that's what *I* say.

When Mr. Ellsworth came on board he said,

"Well, Roy, alone in your glory, eh?" I didn't say anything and I hoped he wouldn't ask me any questions, because anyway, I wasn't going to lie, that's one sure thing. I asked him how the fellows liked the movies and he said, everybody got shot so they were all satisfied. He was just joking. He asked the fellows if they'd like to meet a lot of bandits in real life, and they said, "*Good night,* no." And then he said it was funny how they liked to meet them in the movies and all the fellows had to admit it was crazy. You wouldn't catch Mr. Ellsworth stopping us from going to the movies, but he always makes us feel silly afterward.

Pretty soon Grove Bronson, who is one of the Raving Ravens, came up to me and gave me a newspaper with a whole lot of ears of corn in it, and said we were going to have it for Sunday dinner.

Pee-wee said, "They're dandy big ears all right, and here's some cans of tongue."

"Good night," I told him, "I thought we had tongue enough with you here." Oh, you ought to have seen little Skinny McCord laugh. His face was all thin on account of his not being very strong and he never had much food until he got

in with us, either. But it was fun to see him laugh whenever we got back at Pee-wee.

"There's some heads of cabbage, too," he said; "Doc's got them."

"Heads and ears and tongues," I said; "you ought to have brought some potatoes, so we'd have eyes." He thinks I'm funny, but I just say those things to make him laugh, so as he'll feel good.

Then I took all the stuff into the galley and put it in the food locker. I was just crunching up the newspaper that they brought the corn in, and was going to throw it out of the window, when I saw a heading that read: *Fishermen Have Harrowing Adventure*. Oh, boy, didn't I sit down on the barrel and read that article through! First, I looked to see the date of the paper and I saw it was a couple of days old. After I read that article I cut it out, because I knew I was going to tell you about all these things. So here it is now for you to read:

FISHERMEN HAVE HARROWING ADVENTURE

The fishing schooner Stella B arrived in port to-day with two castaways, who had drifted for three days in an open boat in the stormy waters off Rockaway. The two men, Mike Corby and Dan McCann, hail

from Jersey, and were carried out to sea in their twenty-two foot launch from about a mile south of Sea Gate, where they were fishing.

Their engine broke down and their small boat, beaten by the waves, was leaking rapidly when they were picked up. One of the men was unconscious from lack of nourishment and the other in a state of utter exhaustion from bailing, in an all but futile effort to keep the frail little craft above water. After being resuscitated, one of the men gave a vague account of having encountered a waterlogged life-boat containing several people who had perished from exposure, and of certain papers and possessions found on one of them.

Later when a reporter made an effort to see the men for confirmation of this statement, neither could be found. Both are said to have carried considerable money on their persons, but this was explained by the exceptionally large catches of fish which they sold, during their fishing trip. No means of tracing them is known since the boat, in which one of them resumed his journey home after repairs, had no license number.

Maybe you think I didn't read that article twice. And it made me wonder a lot of things about that fishing trip. One thing, it looked as if they might

have had more adventures than Lieutenant Donnelle had told me about, and maybe he didn't want to tell me everything—that's what I thought. Anyway, he didn't say anything about a life-boat, that's sure. But maybe he forgot to.

Just the same I wondered if maybe he had any other reason for being in such a hurry and so excited, kind of. Then I remembered how he said he would tell me all about it some day. Anyway, I said, he's had a lot of adventures, that's sure. You bet I'd like to have a lot of adventures like that.

CHAPTER V

TELLS ABOUT SKINNY'S MERIT BADGE

THE next day was Sunday and two things happened, not counting dinner. Early in the morning we drew lots to see who'd be deck steward for the day, and Skinny was the one. That meant he'd have to sweep up the deck and wipe the rail and do everything outside like that. Anyway, there wasn't much to do.

At about twelve o'clock I went into the galley to cook dinner and Charlie Seabury and Brick Warner went along to help me. While we were peeling the potatoes, Skinny came in and showed me three or four dimes and some pennies, and said he found them on the deck, when he was sweeping. He said, "I've been to every fellow in the troop and nobody lost any money. Are they yours?"

I told him no and so did Brick and Charlie and we said he had better give them to Mr. Ellsworth. "One of them is a French coin," Brick said, and he showed it to me and I saw that it was.

"I guess one of the fellows dropped some change climbing over the rail," Charlie said, "and maybe didn't miss it on account of not losing all he had, hey?"

"He'd know if he had a French coin and lost it," Brick said.

It made me feel kind of funny, because all the while I knew where those coins came from. Anyway, Skinny went and gave them to Mr. Ellsworth and when we were all together at dinner, Mr. Ellsworth asked us if any fellow owned a French coin that was missing. Nobody said yes, and then he said, kind of funny like, "Well, I suppose this is what our young friend Mr. Walter Harris would call a mystery," and he said we'd put the money in the troop treasury. Then he gave it to Will Dawson (he's in my patrol), because Will is troop treasurer.

Somebody said, "How about the French coin? That's no use in the treasury." And Mr. Ellsworth said we'd give that to Skinny, because he found the money. He said it would be a kind of a merit badge to Skinny, for keeping his eyes open.

I was mighty glad Mr. Ellsworth didn't ask us if anybody knew anything about the money, because then—jiminy, I don't know what I would

have done. Maybe it would have been all right to keep still because I wasn't *dead* sure whose it was. But all the while I knew I *was* sure. Maybe I would have said I knew only I didn't want to tell, hey? Anyway, he didn't ask and that was one good thing.

After dinner Skinny came to me all smiles and said, "I've got a merit badge, it's for keeping my eyes open, and will you bore a hole in it so I can wear it around my neck?" Oh, but that kid was happy.

I said, "Did you have a good dinner, kiddo?" And he said, "Yes, but will you bore a hole in it so I can wear it around my neck?" He looked awful thin and his scout suit didn't fit him and his belt wasn't tight enough and he didn't look anything like pictures you see of scouts—you know what I mean. And when he smiled it made wrinkles in his cheeks. One thing sure, he was different from all the rest of the fellows. Even if it was only a little thing that he was interested in, he got all excited about it, and his eyes got all bright and if he grabbed you by the arm you could feel that his hand was trembling—he'd be so excited. We made a lot of allowance for him, because he was sick and came out of the slums, but anyway, one

trouble with him was, that Mr. Ellsworth couldn't make him study up scouting the way other fellows do. All of a sudden he'd go crazy for the gold medal or the eagle badge and you couldn't tell him that a fellow has to get to be a first class scout, before he can be an eagle scout. "He wants what he wants when he wants it," that's what Mr. Ellsworth said, and he only just laughed and said, "He'll hammer into shape all right, let him enjoy the trip."

And it was just like him—I mean about that French coin. He was always coming to me, too, as if I was scoutmaster and everything else. He began clutching me by the arm and saying, "I got it for keeping my eyes open, didn't I? I got it for being honest and asking all the scout guys, didn't I?"

I had to just pull his hand off my arm, he was holding so fast to it. Cracky, I didn't know what to tell him. Then I said, "I tell you what you do Alf." (I wasn't going to be calling him Skinny,) I said, "You go and ask Vic Norris if he's got an awl or a small gimlet—see? Then I'll fix it for you." Vic had charge of the locker where we kept the lights and oil and tools and all that kind of stuff.

Pretty soon he came back with an awning needle and asked me if it would do. I think he would have gone crazy if I had told him no.

I said, "Yes, I guess so. Come ahead, and let go my arm, do you hear? I'm not going to run away."

Then he said, "I like you better than any of the scout guys."

"We're not guys, we're just scouts," I told him; "you can cut out the guys. Didn't Mr. Ellsworth tell you that?"

The fellows were sitting around on the deck, reading. Some of them were sprawling around on the cabin roof, killing time and jollying Pee-wee. I don't know where Mr. Ellsworth was, but I guess he was inside writing leters. Anyway, it was nice and sunny and you could see the sun in the water. Over on shore, in St. George, I could hear a church bell and it sounded clear. There weren't many boats out, except sometimes the boats to Coney Island went by and we could hear the music. I thought I'd rather be where I was, anyway. Maybe it was because it was Sunday and because it was so still all around that I had a good idea. Anyway, I thought it was a good idea, but *good night,* it got me into a kind of a scrape.

That's one thing about me, I'm always getting in scrapes.

So then I took Skinny and we climbed in through the galley window. I guess nobody noticed us; nobody said anything except El Sawyer. He asked me if I was going to get supper.

"Supper!" I said. "Didn't you just have dinner?" Honest, that fellow never thinks of anything except eats.

When we got into the galley, I said to Skinny, "Let's sit up on the board so we can look out and see the bay." So we sat on the board that was on two barrels. I used it to open cans on and slice bread and all that. And I always washed it good and clean, you can bet. Oh, but it was nice sitting there and it was just as quiet as it is in the woods. Sometimes a motor boat would go by and we could hear it chugging.

"One thing, nobody'll bother us here," I said, "some fellows don't like Sunday, but I do."

Skinny said, "I like Christmas best, because rich people bring baskets of food."

Cracky, I felt awful sorry for him.

CHAPTER VI

TELLS HOW SKINNY AND I GOT TOGETHER

FIRST I bored a hole in the coin and hung it around Skinny's neck. He was all excited and said, "Now I've got a regular merit badge, ain't I?"

I said, "No you haven't, but it's a good badge, all right." Then I said, "Now I'm going to tell you some things about merit badges. You get merit badge because you're able to do special things, see? You get them for being able to do things that some other fellows can't do—kind of. Not exactly that," I told him, "because most fellows can do the things if they try hard enough. But, anyway, there isn't any merit badge for keeping your eyes open. Mr. Ellsworth was only joking about that. And especially you don't get any merit badge for being honest, because that would be too easy. If you could get one for that, gee-whiz, all the fellows would have them, that's sure."

He said, "Ain't it good to be honest?"

I told him sure it was, but it was too easy and that all the scouts were honest anyway, even without badges. Then I said, "If you wore that on account of being honest, that would insult all the other fellows, wouldn't it?" He just stared at me, but didn't say anything. "So you have to be careful," I told him, "not to be saying that you have a reward for being honest, see?"

Then I told him about there not being any badge for keeping his eyes open and finding things. "But there's a badge for something else like that," I said, "only you can't get it yet, because you have to learn a lot of things first, and it's a lot of fun learning them, too."

He said, "Can I learn them right now?"

I said, "No, but you'll learn a lot of them up in camp." Then I told them that the one that had most to do with keeping his eyes open was the stalking badge. So then I got out the Handbook and showed him the picture of it and read him what it said. Gee williger, I don't see where there was any harm in that, do you? I read him the three conditions and the four sub-divisions.

"So you see, that means keeping your eyes open all right," I told him, "because you have to be all the time watching for signs and tracks in the snow

or in the dirt, so as you can tell where a bird went, maybe, and sneak up and watch him."

"That's one thing I can do," he said, "sneak. I'm a little sneak, everybody said so."

Good night, that kid was the limit!

"I don't mean that way," I told him, "but you have to *stalk*. That means to follow a bird or an animal and watch them without them knowing anything about it—see?"

He said, all excited like, "I can sneak up on 'em, so then can I have the badge—for sneaking—like you said?"

Gee whiz, I just sat back and laughed. Then I said, "*Stalking badge;* not sneaking, but *stalking*. That's the badge you're after. So that's the one you want to think about. Don't think about a whole lot of things but just think about that."

He said, "I like you a whole lot, and that's the one I'm going to get, because you say so."

Just then I noticed Stut Moran (we call him that because he stutters) going past the window. Pretty soon I noticed him passing again and walking very slow.

"You just keep your mind on that one badge and remember those letters," I said; "and for goodness' sake don't talk about badges for sneaking.

Because, you take a tip from me, you can only do one thing at a time."

He said, "The poultry badge is a good one. It's got a picture of a rooster on it."

"You should worry about pictures of roosters," I said, " just keep thinking about that one badge, you take my advice. Because you're good on keeping your eyes open and that's the badge for you. And you're small and kind of thin and that's good in stalking, too, because you can hide behind trees and things." Then I said, "If you'll make me a promise that you'll just think about that one badge and not about a lot of others all at once, when we get up to camp, I'll make you a basket out of a peach-pit to hang around your neck."

Just then the door of the galley opened and in came Connie Bennett. Right behind him were Vic Norris and Stut Moran. Connie is leader of the Elks and the other two fellows are Elks, too. Right away he began and I saw he was mad.

"That's a good thing you're talking about—*sneaking,*" he said.

I said, "What do you mean?"

"He's getting a good lesson in sneaking all right," he shot right back at me.

"Gee whiz, I don't know what you're talking about," I said.

"Oh, no," he said, all the while sort of sneering at me; "I suppose you didn't bring him in here so you could be where nobody else heard you. Maybe you think you own the galley."

"Sure I brought him in here so we could be alone," I said.

"Sure you did," he said, "just so you could start him after the stalker's badge. We heard you make him promise to go after that and not think about anything else. He's easy, that kid is."

"Why should I—" I began.

"You know well enough why," he said; "who started the rule about not having two of the same merit badges in a patrol?"

"I did," I told him.

"Yes," he said, "and now you're trying to rush this kid through just so you can get even with Vic. What have *you* got to do with our patrol anyway? Don't you think we're old enough to take care of our new members? All because you and Vic were on the outs last summer."

Jingo, that made me mad. "I forgot all about that," I said; "didn't Vic treat me to a soda only last week? It wasn't a quarrel anyway. I should worry about who has the stalker's badge in your patrol. I didn't even know Vic was after it. You know yourself the kid hasn't begun his second-class

tests yet. What chance does *he* stand if Vic is after it? I only thought I'd try to do a good turn. Cracky, it's hard enough to think up anything to do out here on a Sunday afternoon—you know that yourself. I was waiting all day for somebody to fall overboard, so I could jump in and save them. You're a lot of old grandmothers in your patrol. If that's all you've got to complain about, you'd better go and sweep the wind off the deck."

"You mean to tell me to go and sweep the wind off the deck?" Connie said, coming right up close to me.

"Sure," I said, "and when you get through with that go and clean the reflection out of the water. I should worry. Here, take your new member. If I'd known Vic was after the badge, I wouldn't have said a word about it, you can bet. You ought to know me well enough to know I was just giving him a few tips. Did I have any quarrel with you, Vic?"

Honest, would you believe it, none of them said a word except, "Come ahead, Skinny," and the poor kid followed them out, not knowing what to think, I guess.

"End of a perfect day," I said.

CHAPTER VII

TELLS ABOUT MY MERIT BADGE

WASN'T that a crazy thing? Just because last summer I put a stalking sign on one of Vic's trees. How did I know it was his? As soon as he told me, I marked off my claim the same as any scout would. Maybe I ought to have remembered that he was out for the stalker's badge, but believe me, I have enough to remember with the Silver Fox patrol.

Gee whiz, nobody can say that I ever butt in when a patrol is breaking in a tenderfoot. That's one thing I wouldn't do. I wouldn't even have bothered to tell you about it at all, except that it had *momentous consequences*—that's what Pee-wee said.

At supper there was a big round flat piece of wood tied with a rope at my place and on it was printed *"Sneaker's Badge."* It must have been cut out of a piece of wood from a grocery box, because I noticed on the other side of it, it said *"Honey Boy,"* I suppose it meant some kind of

cookies or crackers or soap maybe. So just for the fun of it I stood up and said.

"Friends and enemies: Ever since about five o'clock this afternoon I've been hunting for a chance to do a good turn. The first one I tried to do didn't pan out. So here's my chance to do a good turn and I have to thank the honorable Elk Patrol for giving me the chance." Then I turned the big wooden medal over so the other side showed and everybody read "*Honey Boy,*" and began to laugh. Even Vic Norris had to laugh. "If it wasn't for the Elks I'd have to go to bed without doing a good turn."

Crinkums, you ought to have seen Mr. Ellsworth laugh. All the time he knew something was wrong, I guess, but he never bothered with things like that. "Settle your own disputes," that's what he always said. The only fellow that didn't take it as a joke was Connie Bennett and just for that reason you'll have to hear more about it.

One thing more happened that day. When it was nearly dark Westy Martin (he's my special chum) came to me and said, "There's a boat coming this way and I think it's coming here." I went over to the rail where all of the fellows were watching and there was a rowboat with two men

in it, headed straight for us. Pretty soon they came alongside and, oh, boy, I was so shaky that I just held onto the rail with my hand trembling. Because they had badges on and I knew they were men belonging to the government.

Good night, I said to myself, it's all up now; they're after Lieutenant Donnelle. They're going to search the house-boat and ask a lot of questions and I'll have to tell.

When they got on board one of them said, "We just want to give you the once over, mate."

Oh, didn't my heart go down to my feet. I thought it would be all right if I didn't stay around because they couldn't ask me any questions if I wasn't there. And I was on the side of Lieutenant Donnelle, I didn't care what. So I went into the galley and began straightening things out there. After a little while Westy came and stuck his head in through the window.

"Are they gone?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said.

Then I said, "What did they want?"

"They were only just inspectors," he said; "and they wanted to know if we had power."

"You mean an engine?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said, "because if a boat has a *fixed*

engine, it has to have a license and a certain kind of whistle and bell and lights and all that."

"A fixed engine?" I said, "if we had one it probably wouldn't be fixed."

"They meant a stationary engine," he said, "you crazy Indian."

"What else did they say?" I asked, because I was still kind of nervous.

"They told us we should have a life preserver for everybody on board and a fog horn."

Cracky, wasn't I relieved. "Isn't Pee-wee fog horn enough?" I said.

Just the same it started me thinking about Lieutenant Donnelle again, and after I went to bed I kept on thinking about him, so I couldn't get to sleep. One thing, I knew I liked him a lot, that was sure. But now since I knew about the new law, that a motor boat has to have a license, I wondered why Jake Holden didn't have one and have the number on his boat, like everybody has to. Anyway, it was lucky for him that he didn't have any number on, because now they'd have a hard job finding him, especially because I knew he didn't give his right name. And then I began wondering about the adventure that Jake and Lieutenant Donnelle had. One thing sure, it must be pretty bad

to be out on the ocean like that in a little boat and be almost dead. I was wondering if there was any more to it than Lieutenant Donnelle told me, maybe. Anyway, he'd had lots of adventures in his life, that was sure. I was glad he said we'd go on a hike some day.

After a while, when I couldn't get to sleep, I got up and went out on the deck and sat in one of the big steamer chairs. Oh, it was fine. It was all pitch dark and all you could see were the lights on the boats. All of a sudden I heard a sound and saw a face and the hair round the face was all hanging down and it gave me a scare, kind of.

Then I saw it was Skinny. He said, "Can I sit down alongside of you?"

I said, "You ought to be in bed," and he said, "I can't go to sleep because I keep thinking and I want to stay right near you. I ain't mad at you, anyway. Were you thinking about how they got mad at you?"

All the while he came closer and he took hold of my arm with his hand and his hand was hot—even through my khaki shirt I could feel it. And his eyes didn't look like the other fellows' eyes.

I said, "I couldn't sleep because I was thinking

about a fellow that's a hero. He's a big fellow. You know what a hero is?" I said.

"Are you a hero?" that's what he said. That's just what he said.

Anyway, one thing I didn't know then, and that was that Skinny was going to have more to do with Lieutenant Donnelle than I was. Poor little kid, he didn't know it either. That was one good thing.

CHAPTER VIII

TELLS ABOUT OUR TRIP UP THE HUDSON

He said, "If they get mad when I talk to you, I'll talk to you on the sly. It's all right to like a fellow that isn't in your patrol, isn't it?"

"Sure it is," I told him, "you have to like everybody. But you do what they tell you and then nobody'll get mad."

He said, "The swimming badge is a good one, isn't it?"

"It's a dandy one," I said. Then he told me that was the one they wanted him to try for." He said, "Can I try for it now?"

I thought I'd better watch my step—safety first, hey? So I said, "You ask Connie. I shouldn't think there'd be any objection to trying now; then after you've passed your first class tests you could just scoop the badge right up, see?"

"I looked at all the pictures of the badges," he said, "and I like the one with the picture of a rooster best. Is the swimming one better than that?"

I said, "Yes, because every scout has got to know how to swim. Anyway, Connie knows best; and he's your patrol leader, so you do whatever he tells you to."

"Will I be able to beat everybody swimming?" he said.

I told him maybe, if he tried hard, and then I told him he'd better go to bed. He said he wouldn't be able to sleep now, on account of thinking about the swimming badge. Anyway, he went and I noticed how skinny his legs were. It made me feel awful sorry for him, because his suit didn't fit him and looked kind of funny. His eyes were funny, anyway, and gave me the fidgets, but in the dark you could just see them shine. I told him to go inside and go to sleep and not think about the swimming badge.

One thing about Skinny, I knew he'd never make a good all-around scout, like some fellows. You know what I mean. Now you take Artie Van Arlen—he's got eleven merit badges and he's got the bronze medal. Maybe you'd say photography was his bug, but he never went crazy about it, that's one sure thing. Take *me,* I've got nine merit badges—the more the merrier, I don't care.

But Skinny could only think about one thing

and he'd go clean crazy about it. Mr. Ellsworth says he's *intense*— hanged if I know what that is. All I know is that he couldn't think about a lot of things. He just couldn't read the Handbook through. All of a sudden, when he'd be reading it, he'd see something that he liked, and good night, he'd forget everything else. Mr. Ellsworth said Skinny would never do anything except *one* thing, and most likely that would be a big stunt and if he failed, it would kill him. I guess he was a kind of a genius, like—you know what I mean. Either that or he was half crazy. I could never make him out, I know that.

One thing, I was mighty glad he was going in for the swimming badge and I hoped the Elks would help him. He'd sure have the best swimmer in the troop to help him and that was Hunt Ward; he can swim better than any Raven, or Silver Fox, either—I have to admit that. Especially it's good to go in for the swimming badge right away as soon as you join a troop, even though you can't get your award till you pass your first class tests, because, gee, every fellow ought to know how to swim, that's one sure thing.

The next morning good and early we could see the *General Grant* (that's Captain Savage's tug),

heading across the bay straight for us and as soon as it got close enough, we gave Captain Savage a good cheer. Captain Savage was standing up in the little house smoking his pipe, and he shouted to us and said he was delayed on account of getting his propeller wet. That was just like him, he was always joking.

Then he shouted to us. "It's a wonder you wouldn't get into shallow water; do you know how many feet you've got?" Pee-wee shouted back, "Two; what do you think we are, quadrupeds?" Laugh! Honest, that kid is a scream.

I guess we must have been in pretty shallow water, because Captain Savage made us all hustle throwing ropes and winding them around thing-um-bobs—you know what I mean. And he was in such a hurry that he didn't come on the house-boat at all. But he said we had a mighty neat, comfortable craft, and that it looked as if it might have slid off some street or other into the water. He was awful funny.

Pretty soon we were sailing up the Hudson alongside of the *General Grant*. The day before I thought that when the tug came it would tow us behind with a long rope and it seemed funny like, to be tied fast alongside the tug. It seemed kind

of as if the house-boat was being arrested—you know how I mean.

Anyway, I liked that way best because we could be always climbing back and forth, and believe me, most of us were on the tug all the time. I guess maybe Captain Savage liked Pee-wee. Anyway, he called for Pee-wee and me to go up in the pilot house, and it was fine to watch him steer and pull the rope that made the whistle blow. Jiminety, didn't we jump the first time we heard it!

Captain Savage said, "Yer see it don't cost me nuthin' fur a blow-out, as you might say. Now, if this here old craft was an automobile, how much would I have to pay for tires with a blow-out every minute, huh?" Then he'd look awful funny like, at Pee-wee.

You can bet Captain Savage was nice to us fellows and we all liked him. He had to stop at Peekskill and he took us all ashore for a peek—that's what he said. And he treated us all to sodas. You get dandy raspberry sodas in Peekskill.

After that we started for Poughkeepsie and that was as far as he was going to tow us, because he had to tow a barge down to New York. But, any-

way, we should worry, there isn't any tide above Poughkeepsie and any dinky little kicker could tow us up to Catskill Landing from there. "Believe me," I said, "if there are any ways around here, we'll find them." Finding ways to do things is our middle name.

We had Captain Savage on the house-boat to lunch with us and Mr. Ellsworth made a speech and said we were all much obliged to him and, oh, boy, when that tug started down the river again, didn't we stand on the cabin roof of the house-boat and cheer Captain Savage. He had about six blow-outs before he got very far—just answering our cheers.

Oh, cracky, but he was one fine man.

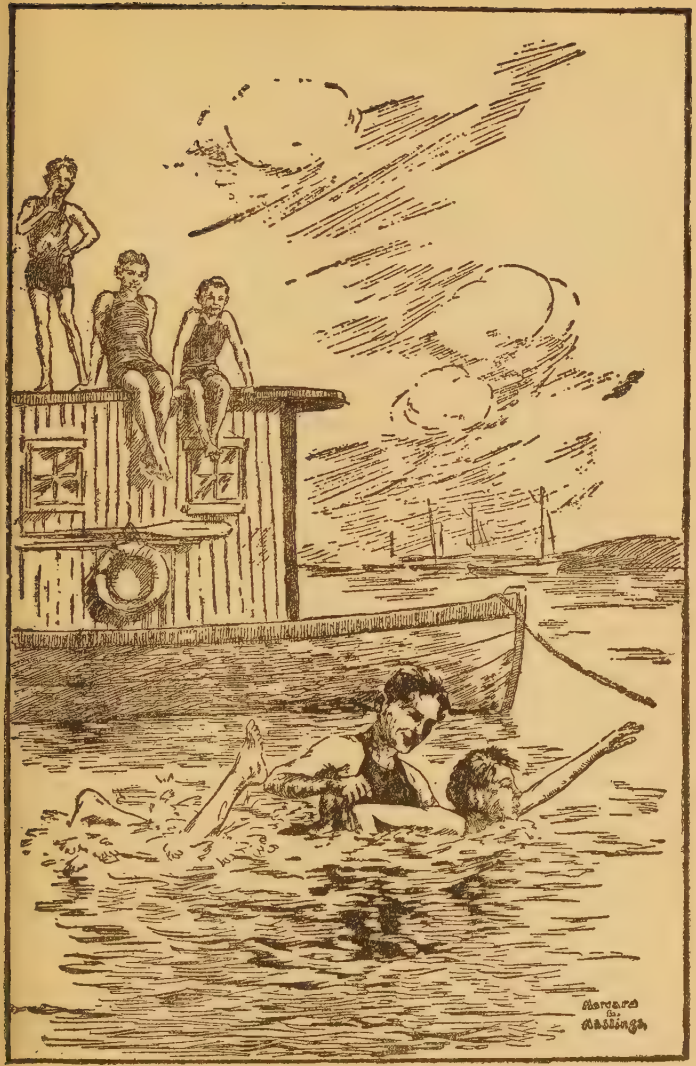
CHAPTER IX

TELLS ABOUT SKINNY'S SWIMMING LESSON

I DON'T know what to call this chapter. Maybe it will come without calling, hey? Anyway, I should worry. Maybe I'll think of a name when I'm finished with it. It will be mostly about Skinny.

There isn't much more to tell about our trip to Catskill Landing, but you just wait, and there'll be a lot to tell you about our cruise down again. Don't be in a hurry—just you wait. More haste, less speed. But take it from me, you don't get much speed out of a house-boat. A house-boat belongs to the merry-go-round family, that's what Mr. Ellsworth says.

That night we kept the boat tied up to the dock in Poughkeepsie and took a hike around the town, while Mr. Ellsworth tried to find somebody who would tow us up to Catskill Landing. When we got back, he said he had been talking with a man who had a little steam yacht and would tow us as far as Catskill Landing. He said it wouldn't cost



MOST OF THE TIME WAS SPENT IN TEACHING SKINNY TO SWIM.

anything, because anyway he was going up through Lake Champlain and Lake George and he was strong for the Boy Scouts. You hear lots of men say that. But, one thing, he wasn't going for two days and so we'd have to stay tied up in Poughkeepsie waiting for him. You see we were a kind of a tramp boat, but what did we care as long as we got to camp some time or other. Scouts are tramps anyway, hey?

So now I have to tell you about that two days we spent in Poughkeepsie and most of the time we spent in teaching Skinny to swim. Of course, that was up to the Elks and you can bet I didn't interfere, nor any of my patrol either, but I was mighty glad to see how easy it was for him to learn.

"That kid is half fish," Doc Carson said to me.

"No wonder," I said, "most all his life has been spent in the marshes. He's going to be a cracker-jack, you see."

"He'll walk away with that badge when he once gets started," Westy said.

"You mean he'll swim away with it," I said; "gee-williger, look how that little codger can dive."

One thing, there was a dandy place for learning, that's sure.

We put the skiff into the water and a couple of the Elks rowed around near the house-boat, keeping near, while Hunt Ward showed Skinny the strokes. The rest of us sat along the cabin roof, cheering just so's the kid would be encouraged. He looked awfully thin and little in his bathing suit and whenever he climbed up to the deck of the house-boat the wet cloth stuck tight to him and made him look, oh, I don't know, kind of like a marsh rat, as you may say. That's what he always said people called him, a *swamp rat,* and I guess he was even kind of proud of it.

One sure thing, he was game. And he was just the same in learning to swim as he was in everything else; he got all excited and wanted to go too fast. As soon as he got the hang of it and could manage a few strokes, *good night,* he wanted to swim across the river. He started right off before the fellows in the boat noticed him and was heading across stream. Two or three times we heard him sputtering and shouting, *"Now can I have that badge?"*

Late that afternoon they let him dive off the deck. It was low and it didn't make much of a

dive. Of course, he didn't dive right, he only just jumped and went kerflop into the water, and he had us all laughing. As soon as he found out how much fun it was, he kept climbing up and splashing into the water again; oh, boy, it was as good as a circus to see him. Then he'd go swimming to the skiff and climb in just like a little eel, and sit there shivering.

You can bet that kid is going to have the swimming badge all right, we all said; the trouble is going to be to hold him back. And we were right, too, because when he came up on the cabin roof to get dry, all of a sudden, before any of us knew it, he was over at the edge and dived off before Mr. Ellsworth had a chance to call to him. That was sure too much of a dive for a beginner, for if he hit the water face down and flat, *good night,* that might have been the end of him. The skiff was hauled up then so Hunt Ward dived in after him, but he had to swim some to catch him and it was mighty funny to see them.

That night Mr. Ellsworth gave Skinny a good lecture and told him he mustn't do things like that until he was told to, but I guess Skinny didn't understand. When I saw Mr. Ellsworth sitting

alone on the deck after dark, I went up and sat down and began talking to him. I often do that.

I said, "I guess Skinny's going to get the swimming badge, all right."

"Yes, I guess he is," that's what Mr. Ellsworth said, "Skinny's too much for me. If the boys would only teach him a little scouting, I'd be better pleased. He wants to be a swimmer now; he's not thinking about being a scout. He thinks of the badge only as something to wear."

"I tried to teach him some things out of the Handbook," I said, "but the Elks didn't like it. I tried to tell him some things about scouting and all I got was a good lecture from Connie. Nix on teaching fellows in other patrols."

Mr. Ellsworth seemed awfully worried, kind of; he just sat thinking a minute. Then he said, "I'm afraid Skinny is going to be hard to tame. He'll make a fine swimmer and a fine stalker—"

I said, "He calls that sneaking."

Mr. Ellsworth laughed and said, "But the principal thing is to make him a good scout. Has he done any good turns?"

I said, "The only good turns I know about, are the good turns he made in diving; he turns every which way."

"Well, I hope he can forget about swimming long enough to eat his supper," Mr. Ellsworth said.

But just the same Skinny didn't.

CHAPTER X

TELLS ABOUT SKINNY AND THE ELKS

WELL, that was the way it was with Skinny and I could see that the Elks were rushing him through, so that he'd get the badge. That used to be one trouble with the Elks and I don't care if they do know I said it. They got one good lesson to cure them, that's sure. The trouble with them was they were making a collection of badges and when you're out for badges, you skip at lot of pages in the Handbook, that's sure.

The next day I said to Connie Bennett—this is just what I said; I said, "I hope you won't get mad at me again if I say something about Skinny, because, anyway, it's none of *my* business, that's sure. But as long as you fellows are busy teaching him stunts and things, I don't see that there would be any harm in it, if I read some things in the Handbook to him—some other kind of things, I mean."

He said, "What kind of things?"

"Oh, just about the laws and things like that, like about being honest and obedient—you know."

"You keep your hands off my patrol," that's just what he said; "and you needn't start hinting that the Elks are dishonest—"

"Who's hinting that?" I said, kind of mad; "you remind me of an airplane, you're always going up in the air."

"If any of my patrol are dishonest, they'll be thrown out," he said, "and maybe they'll be welcome in the Silver Foxes."

"Sure," I said, "we make a specialty of burglars and pickpockets; we eat 'em alive. All I was asking you was that you let me teach Skinny some of the 'idea' stuff—you know what I mean."

"You're jealous because he's a genius," Connie said; "and you want to fill him up with grandmother stuff. Why don't you let the kid alone? We'll take care of him."

"All right," I said; "I should worry. Only there's no use getting mad; we're all one troop."

"Yes, but we're three separate patrols," he said.

"United we stand, divided we sprawl," I said. Then he walked away.

That was the second day at Poughkeepsie and most all day the Elks were busy turning Skinny into

a fish. Some of the rest of us went up to Metzger's Candy Store to get some jaw-breakers. Did you ever eat those? Pee-wee was quiet for an hour munching one. The licorice ones are best. In the afternoon we sat along the cabin roof watching Skinny and the Elks. Good night, you should have seen that kid! Every time the fellows in the boat had to row after him, because he'd go swimming away on his own hook. He never paid any attention to what they told him.

"Throw him a jaw-breaker," Grove Bronson said; "just for fun."

"Nix," I said; "you don't catch me interfering with the buzz-saw. Twice was enough. When I try any polishing, I'll polish up the Silver Foxes."

"Go ahead, throw him one," Grove said to Pee-wee. But I guess Pee-wee didn't have any jaw-breakers to spare. His cheeks were sticking out and there was licorice all over his lips, and he said —this is the way it sounded: "I—ooo—go—to—goo—to—are—" something like that, honest.

"Go in and wash your face," Doc said; "you look like a minstrel actor in a rainstorm."

"Yu—sht—p—m—nd—r—n—business." Pee-wee blurted out. Crackey, I thought I'd die.

Pretty soon Doc Carson (he's a Raven) threw

a jaw-breaker out into the water and Skinny got it before it went down.

"What do you know about that little water snake," El Sawyer said. Then he shouted, "Bully for you, Skinny!"

I said, "You'd better look out, you'll get yourself in trouble."

"What do I care for the Elks?" he said.

"That's all right," I said; "Connie's got Skinny copyrighted, all rights reserved."

Then, all of a sudden, Wig Weigand shouted, "Look at that, will you? Look!"

We could just see Hunt Ward reach out of the skiff for Skinny, when all of a sudden he disappeared and came up about twenty feet from the skiff. Everybody began laughing and I guess the Elks were mad, because they thought we were just sitting up there kidding them.

Right then I heard Mr. Ellsworth calling out from just in back of us, "Take him in the skiff and bring him aboard, Huntley."

"Now—e—ng—t—gt—cld—down," Pee-wee said, munching away on a jaw breaker.

"You look as if you'd been gargling a bottle of ink," I told him. "Don't talk, you can't do two things at once."

Pretty soon Skinny came up the ladder to the cabin roof where we were all sitting. His wet bathing suit stuck to him and it made him look terribly thin, and his hair was all streaked and the water was dripping from his face. But anyway, his eyes were bright and all excited—I never saw another fellow that had eyes like that. He had the piece of candy in his hand and it was all melting from the water and his hand was black and sticky. Jiminy, he looked awful small and skinny alongside of Mr. Ellsworth, and I had to feel sorry for him as soon as Mr. Ellsworth began to speak.

Skinny looked up at him and said, "I got it—I dived and got it—see—I saved it—I didn't eat it. I can swim under the water. Now can I have the badge?" Cracky, the way he stared, if I'd had the badge, I'd have torn it off my arm and handed it to him, honest I would.

Mr. Ellsworth just looked at him and said, "No, you may not have the badge. Before you can have the badge for swimming you must be a better scout. You must learn to be obedient. You heard one of your patrol tell you not to go under water. You heard your patrol leader tell you

to get into the skiff. Do you think you know better than they do, what is best for you?"

Even still he didn't pay any attention, he was so excited. "Now am I a hero?" he said.

"No, you are not a hero," Mr. Ellsworth told him; "and you will go inside and get your uniform on. The first duty of a scout is to obey his leader, and you have failed to do that. You are very much mistaken as to the meaning of heroism, and it wasn't necessary to bring us any proof that you got the candy or whatever that is. Scouts are not in the habit of lying and deceiving. We expect always to believe you without proof. Throw that away and go inside and get your clothes on."

Gee, maybe he was right, but anyway, I felt mighty sorry for Skinny. His eyes were all full of tears and he went over to the rail and threw the sticky jaw-breaker out into the water. I I could see by his neck that he was gulping and trying not to cry and, oh, boy, it made me feel bad. It seemed as if it was always that way with him—that he had to be disappointed and that things never came out right with him. Anyway, I said to myself, it's Connie's fault, and all the rest of the Elks are to blame, too. Why didn't they tell him in the beginning about those other

things. All they cared about was showing their new member off to the rest of the troop, and you see how it ended.

First I thought I'd go in and talk to Skinny and tell him he was a wonder, for that was just what he was, and Mr. Ellsworth knew it, too. Then I decided that I'd better not on account of Connie. And anyway, I wouldn't have any right to go in and spoil what our scoutmaster said, would I?

CHAPTER XI

TELLS YOU HOW TO GET TO TEMPLE CAMP

GEE whiz, I wouldn't say anything against the Elks, that's sure, because they're all peachy scouts when you come right down to it, but I have to admit that they're crazy about stunts. They have more merit badges in their patrol than there are in the Ravens and Silver Foxes put together. Hunt Ward's sleeve looks like one of those Indian totem poles, there are so many badges on it. Anyway, I should worry, we have twenty-two badges in our patrol, and more good turns in the troop book than either of the other patrols. That's what counts, too—good turns.

The trouble with the Elks was that every time they got a new fellow, he must take a header for some badge or other and most always he would have two or three stunt badges (that's merit badges, you know) waiting for him when he passed his first class tests. "Begin at the beginning," that's what Mr. Ellsworth always said, and he says it's more important to know the scout

oath and follow it, than it is to get the eagle award. Connie's a good patrol leader all right; gee, nobody can say he isn't, but he's crazy about stunts and merit badges. He always seemed to think that that was all there was to scouting. But believe me, there's many a girl wears a sailor hat who screams when she gets in a boat. Anyway, I'm not going to be knocking anybody.

Well, the next day in the middle of the night —I mean the next night early in the morning—I mean when it was just getting light, after the night after the next day—we got to Catskill Landing, and oh, boy! wasn't I glad! We tied the house-boat to an old pier maybe a couple of hundred yards above the regular landing, and had a good swim and then breakfast before we started up to camp. Mr. Ellsworth let Skinny go in, but he told him to be careful not to disobey his leaders or he'd have to come out.

Jiminy, it was funny to see that kid. I don't know how to tell you about it, but he seemed to kind of swim different from the other fellows, and he couldn't help getting excited. They threw pieces of stick for him to get, and he would swim out and bring them in in his mouth just like a dog, and then wait for more, all anxious like. One

thing about Skinny I noticed, and that was that all the fellows, even in his own patrol, got a lot of fun out of him, making him do things, but nobody exactly seemed to make friends with him. Anyway, I guess he didn't care, he was always so crazy about what he was doing. Even a lot of summer people stood around on the shore, watching him in the water and saying he was a wonder. I guess they didn't know what to do with themselves, hey? Mostly that's the way it is with summer people.

I flopped some flapjacks for breakfast and El Sawyer (he's a Raven) hung one of them around his neck for a souvenir. He's a fresh kid. Maybe you think it's easy to flop flapjacks—I should worry.

Oh, boy, now comes the best part of this whole story. As soon as we could get our stuff into the duffel bags and the boat all tied fast, we started out on our hike for Temple Camp. You can bet I always like to hike, but early in the morning, oh, it's simply great. Some fellows can drink sodas early in the morning but I can't, but anyway, early hikes are my middle name. You know, just when the sun is coming up, all red like, and peeking over the hill, just as if it was stalking.

Oh, boy, if scouts could only sneak up as quiet as all that!

Now the way you get to Temple Camp is to hike up through Catskill village till you get to the old turnpike road, and then go straight along that till you come to a big boarding house, where there are a lot of people sitting on the porch waiting for breakfast or dinner or supper, or time to go to bed. Then you hit the road up through the woods till you come to a turtle. I guess he isn't there now, but anyway, he was there last year. Then you cut up through the woods and follow the scouts' signs, and you'll come out at Leeds—that's a village. You'll see all the summer people waiting for their mail at the post office. Some of them will say, "Oh, there go some boy scouts, aren't they cute?" They always say that. There's a stationery store there too, where you can buy fishhooks and marshmallows, and other things to eat. I don't mean you eat fishhooks.

Anyway, you go down Main Street till you come to a smell like rotten wood and then you turn in where the willow trees are and you come to an old sawmill. If you holloa from there, they can hear you at camp. Then you cut through the woods and follow the trail till all of a sudden you

come plunk out on the edge of the lake and it's all surrounded by woods. That's Black Lake, and believe me, black is my favorite color when it comes to lakes. Then you go across in the boats to Temple Camp.

Mr. John Temple started Temple Camp. He's rich and owns a lot of railroads and things. He used to be mad at the scouts, but after a while when he saw what kind of fellows scouts are, he got glad at them and started Temple Camp. He's awful grouchy when you first see him, but you should worry about that. Once, when he was out west about some railroads, he saw Jeb Rushmore, who was a trapper and all that, and he was getting old, so Mr. Temple made him come to Temple Camp to be camp manager and live there. Oh, boy, you're going to see him in just a minute and I can hardly wait.

CHAPTER XII

TELLS ALL ABOUT OUR ROW ON BLACK LAKE

So that's the way we went to Temple Camp, but there are short cuts to the Hudson besides that. When we got near to the lake we all got anxious —you know how a fellow is when he's almost to a place he's been thinking about a lot.

Doc Carson said, "I see the water is still wet." That was just to jolly Pee-wee.

"That's because of the recent rains," I said.

"The which?" Artie asked me.

"You think you're smart talking about *recent rains,* don't you?" Pee-wee shouted. "You got that out of a book."

"I bet there'll be a lot of troops there this summer," El Sawyer said.

Pretty soon I saw he was right, too, because five boats came across to get us and there was a strange scout in every single one of them. Uncle Jeb was waiting at the landing on the other side to meet us, and oh, cracky, didn't it look good to see the big pavilion and the tents and patrol

cabins upside down in the water. There were a lot of scouts waiting too, and I could see the camp was pretty full.

Uncle Jeb said, "Wall, Roay"—that's just the way he talks, slow like; "haow's all the boys from Bridgeboro? I reckon little Pee-wee ain't growed at all. Hain't you never goin' ter grow, Pee-wee? And Artie and Grovey, and El, and Hunter Ward and, let's see, Vic Norris—every plaguy one of yer here. Ain't none of yer died or gone off ter war, hey? And there's Connover Bennett, too, large as life, and still crazy about raisin cake, I reckon. Wall, wall, it's good ter see ye all."

I said, "It's good to see you, too, Uncle Jeb, gee, all the fellows were crazy to see you. that's one sure thing."

"And still making them flapjacks, hey?" he said; "I remember when one uv them New Hampshire scouts scaled one uv them flapjacks uv your'n across the lake. I reckon you're the same old Roay that put the mosquito dope in the biscuits. Yer remember that?" Cracky, I'm not going to tell you anything about my past life, but summer before last up there—*oh, boy!*

Most of the morning we rested up and got our patrol cabins cleaned out and all fixed up, and in

the afternoon we banged around and got acquainted with some of the new troops.

Just before supper, Westy and I went down for a swim and there were Connie Bennett and two or three of the Elks diving with Skinny. A whole lot of fellows were standing around watching. Most of them laughed at Skinny, but they all had to admit he was a crackerjack. I knew the Elks were just kind of showing him off and putting him through a lot of freak stunts just to get their name up around the camp.

After supper, Westy and I and a new fellow in an Ohio troop were rowing around near the shore. He was an awful nice fellow—quiet like—just like me, only different. All of a sudden we noticed Skinny standing on the shore and he called out and asked us if we'd take him in.

"Better watch your step," Westy said; "safety first."

"Where's your patrol?" I called to him.

"They went on a hike," he called back; "can I go with you?"

"You go and ask Mr. Ellsworth," I said; "and if he says it's all right, come ahead."

We could see him scooting pell mell around the edge of the cooking shack, his spindle legs as thin

as sticks. Bert Winton (that was the new fellow) watched him, kind of laughing, and then he said, "Queer little codger, isn't he?"

I said, "Yes, he's new and he came out of the slums. I guess he'll never work in harness; that's what our scoutmaster says."

"Swims like an eel," Winton said; "why didn't they take him hiking, I wonder?"

"Hanged if *I* know," Westy said; "he's going to win them the swimming badge, all right. But he doesn't seem to be friends with them exactly. They make good use of him, anyway."

"Kind of a performing bear, hey?" Bert said.

"Something like that," I told him; "I wish I had him in my patrol, I know that."

"Guess he wouldn't fit into any patrol," Winton said; "he seems to be a kind of an odd number."

Pretty soon Skinny came running back shouting for all he was worth, and believe me, he did look like an odd number. His streaky hair was all down over his forehead and his eyes were like a couple of camp fires. He was shouting: *"Don't go, don't go! I can go with you."*

We rowed over to shore and as he climbed in I could see that he was trembling all over, just for fear we wouldn't wait for him, I suppose. "I was

going to swim out to you, I was," he said; "if you didn't wait."

"You wouldn't want your scout suit to get all wet, would you?" I said. "Sit down and don't be so excited."

"I like the water better than hiking, anyway," he said; "and I like *you* best of all."

I said, "The pleasure is mine," and then we all laughed.

"You can make fun of me all you want," he said; "I don't care. I told them they could make fun of me all they want if they'd let me go with them, but they wouldn't let me go."

"They wouldn't, huh?" Bert Winton said, and he studied Skinny awful funny like.

"When I win them the badge, then they'll take me, won't they?" he said.

"I guess so," I told him.

"I'm going to win the cup for them in the contest, too," he said; "I'm going to win it for them before I go home. Then I'll be friends with them. I told them I'd win it if *you* didn't try for it."

"You should worry about me," I said, "I can swim, but *good night,* I'm not in the contest class.

And maybe you're not either, so don't be too sure."

He said, "I'm going to win them the cup, and I'm going to win them the badge. But I don't have to get to be a first class scout guy to win the cup, I don't. It's made of silver. Once my father stole a lot of silver. It's all fancy, that cup."

"I know all about the cup, Alf," I said; (because, gee, I didn't like to be calling him Skinny) "but don't call the fellows scout guys. Just scouts —that's enough." He just looked at me kind of wild, as if he didn't understand, the same as he always did when anybody called him down, or tried to tell him something.

For a few minutes nobody spoke and we just rowed around. Then Westy said, "So that's their game, is it?"

I knew well enough what he meant. Every season Mr. Temple offers a silver cup to the best swimmer at Temple Camp. Once Mr. Temple had a son who got drowned because he couldn't swim, and that's why he's so interested in fellows being good swimmers. That silver cup hasn't got anything to do with the scout swimming badge. You can't win that (anyway they won't give it to

you) till you've passed your first class tests. But anybody can try for the silver cup, and you can bet it's a big honor for any troop or patrol to have that. Most always they have the contest on Labor Day.

I said, "Alf, you can bet I'd be glad to see you win that cup, but don't forget that there are more than a hundred fellows at the camp. Some of the troops come from the seashore—you know that, and they're all crackerjack swimmers. It comes mighty hard to be disappointed, so don't you stay awake at night thinking about it." I said that because I could just see that poor kid dreaming about handing that cup over to his patrol leader, and honestly, I didn't think there was much chance for him.

Pretty soon Bert Winton leaned over and said to me, "Do you suppose that's true about his father?"

"Guess so," I told him.

"He doesn't seem to be very much ashamed of it," he said.

All I could say was, "He's a queer kid; he's all the time blurting out things like that."

"Maybe it's because he's just plain honest," Winton said.

"But you'd think he'd be ashamed," I told him.

He just shrugged his shoulders and looked kind of funny at Skinny. I had a kind of a hunch that he liked him and believed in him. Anyway, I remembered those words, *"just plain honest."*

CHAPTER XIII

TELLS ABOUT THE STRANGE CAMPERS

It was nice rowing around there in the dark. It wasn't so very dark, though, because the moon was out and you could see it in the water just as plain as if it had fallen kerflop out of the sky and was laying in the bottom of the lake. Over on shore we could see the camp-fire getting started and black figures going toward it, and the blaze was upside down in the water.

"How about camp-fire?" Westy said.

"We should worry about camp-fire," I told him; "there's plenty of time. Wait till it gets to blazing up good and high."

"It's fine out here," Bert Winton said; "I always take a row before going in to camp-fire."

"We should worry about you, too," I heard somebody say, and then a lot of fellows began laughing. By that I knew they had heard everything we said.

Winton said, "Funny how clear you can hear people talk when they're on the water."

Pretty soon we were away over at the other side of the lake and it was awfully still, and even our oars seemed to make a lot of noise dripping the water.

All of a sudden Westy said, "There's a canoe."

We could only just see it as it went gliding by us, but I noticed there were two dark figures in it.

Winton said, "Shh, wait till they pass us, then I'll tell you about them."

"I bet they're evil cronies," I said; "like they usually have in books." Because you know how it is in books; there are always a couple of bad fellows that won't join the good ones, but go camping right near them and make a lot of trouble for them. Hanged if I see why they don't join in with them and be done with it, hey?

Pretty soon Winton said very low, "They're a couple of millionaire campers—young fellows. Their people are staying near Leeds and those fellows have got a tent right across there in the woods near the shore. They're having the time of their lives with an up-to-date oil stove and a couple of fireless cookers and some thermos bottles and things. They've got cushions with buckskin fringe—presents from Dearie and

Sweetie, I suppose, and they've got a cedar chest with brass hinges. Regular modern Daniel Boones, they are."

"Oh, me, oh, my!" Westy whispered; "have they got jackknives hanging from their belts?"

"Right the first time," Bert Winton said.

"And leather cases of writing paper?" I said, just for fun.

"Everything except a burglar alarm and a telephone," Bert said; "but they're not half bad chaps. We'll row over and see them some day. They have wild times around their camp-fire, telling yarns and watching the roaring blaze in their oil stove. They've got a fancy Indian blanket, you ought to see it. One of them paddled over to camp one day and wanted to buy a fishing rod. He had about a hundred dollars with him. He couldn't even swim."

"Good night!" I said.

Then, all of a sudden Skinny piped up, "If I had a hundred dollars I'd buy a canoe, I would. I'd have it painted red. I'd have a sail for it, too. Then all the fellows would like me, wouldn't they?"

I said, "Shh, don't shout like that; people can

hear you all over. The fellows like you now, don't you worry."

"I don't care if they hear me," he said.

Pretty soon we rowed over and went up and sprawled around camp-fire. Gee, whiz, I guess the whole camp was there. One of the scouts in a Virginia troop was telling a yarn about somebody who had an adventure at sea. It was mighty interesting, you can bet, and it kind of started me thinking about Lieutenant Donnelle. Little I knew of the terrible thing that was going to happen at camp the very next day. Right across from me I could see Skinny sitting near Mr. Ellsworth, but the rest of the Elks were sprawling around with the Ravens. One thing, my patrol always sticks together. Skinny's eyes looked awful big and wild, kind of, with the fire shining right in his face and it made me feel kind of spooky to look at him. Poor kid, little he knew what he was going to go through. Anyway, I wished that the Elks would call him over to them. Probably he was thinking about how he was going to win them the silver cup, hey?

CHAPTER XIV

TELLS ABOUT THE STORM ON BLACK LAKE

ONE thing I have to admit, and that is that Mr. Ellsworth helped me a lot with this chapter and the next one too. But just the same both of them are by me, all right.

It's a funny thing, but all that night I was dreaming about that canoe with the two fellows in it. I could hear them paddling just as clear as could be, only when I woke up before daylight, I knew it was just the sound of rain on the roof of our patrol cabin. It was dripping into the rain ditch, I guess.

Pretty soon I went to sleep again, and I could see Skinny standing in front of me and his eyes were staring and his face was all white and there was some blood on it and he said, "I want to be a Silver Fox, because my father stole a lot of silver; so haven't I got a right to be?" I tried to answer him, but there was a loud noise and he couldn't hear and then, all of a sudden, I woke up and I knew the noise was thunder and Skinny wasn't

there at all. Anyway, it made me feel kind of creepy and I was glad when I saw him at breakfast.

All that morning it rained and most of the scouts stayed in their tents and cabins. Some of them played basketball in the pavilion. Three fellows from the Boston troop went out fishing, but they had to come in it was raining so hard.

Before dinnertime, Uncle Jeb called some of us to move the mess boards into the pavilion, because it was beginning to blow from the east and the awnings and thatch roofs over the mess boards didn't keep the rain off, because it blew sideways. Out on the lake the water was churning up rough with little white caps. Jiminy, I never saw it like that before.

It was so dark and rainy that a fellow couldn't read even; anyway *I* couldn't because, oh, I don't know, I felt queer kind of. A lot of us sat on the wide porch of the pavilion—the side facing the lake. It was wide enough so the rain didn't come in and wet us as long as we stayed way back near the windows. We sat in a long row with our chairs tilted back. It was nice there.

Somebody said, "That spring-board looks lonely

sticking out into the lake; look how the drops jump off it, just like fellows diving."

"Not much of a day for the race," Doc Carson said.

"What race?" Pee-wee shouted.

"The human race," Doc said; "no sooner said than stung."

We were just starting to jolly Pee-wee, because that's our favorite indoor sport, when somebody said, "There's one of the gold dust twins out; he must be crazy."

"He comes from Maine," another fellow said; "I guess he's a maniac."

But anyway, it was no joke, that was sure. Away over near the other side of the lake we could see the canoe bobbing up and down and it seemed to be coming toward us.

"Only one of them is in it," I said.

"And that's one too much on a day like this; that pair are sure nutty," Doc said.

But just the same the canoe came along and one of those campers was sitting in the stern paddling it. He was having a pretty hard job, I could see that, but maybe it wasn't as dangerous as it looked, because if you know how to manage a canoe it's better than an old tub of a boat in bad weather.

"He's making it all right," one of the fellows said; "he's game, that's sure."

Pretty soon he came alongside the landing and turned his canoe over to let the water out, and then came up to the pavilion.

"Pretty wet," he said.

"You said something," Westy answered him; "you took a big chance coming over."

"I'd sure have been drowned if I *hadn't* come," he laughed; "I wonder if you fellows can sell us a shovel? Our tent is floating."

I had to laugh, because that's always the one thing that most campers who aren't used to it forget about—I mean digging a drain ditch outside their tent. And the first time it rains, *good night,* they get drowned out like rats. I thought he was a pretty nice kind of a fellow, only he was one tenderfoot, that was sure. He had a swell bathing suit on with one of those waterproof mackinaw jackets over it. I guess his people were rich all right, and I suppose that's why the fellows at camp called the pair the gold dust twins. He took some bills out of his pocket and said, "We want to buy a shovel; you can't dig a trench with a canoe paddle. There's fine swimming in our tent."

Then Bert Winton said, kind of quiet in that way he had, "I don't think you'll need any money here. I'll get hold of one of the scoutmasters," and he started down the steps. Just then I noticed Skinny standing on the steps and Bert Winton gave him a push, just for fun, as he went by.

"Come on in out of the rain, Alf," I said; because I knew he was just hanging there, because he was afraid to come up where the rest of us were. I asked him where his patrol was, and he said, "In the cabin, playing checkers." I said, "Don't *you* know how to play checkers," and he said, "No." After that I didn't notice him.

Pretty soon the gold dust twin came back with a shovel and Mr. Elting, who is resident trustee, was with him, telling him he'd better not go back across the lake on account of its blowing up harder.

"I could never get around through the woods," he said; " because I tried it."

"Some of these boys will show you the trail," Mr. Elting said.

But he said, "No," and that as long as he came he was going to go back. He said he didn't want any escort. He was pretty game, that was one sure thing. I guess maybe he felt sort of ashamed to have boy scouts show him the way, because he

was older than most of us. Anyway, he started back and we sat there watching him, and pretty soon it seemed as if a kind of a screen was behind him, the rain was so thick and there was so much mist. It made him look sort of like a ghost or a —you know— a spectre.

Then, all of a sudden Artie Van Arlen's hat blew off and I heard a branch of a tree crack.

"Where is the canoe?" Doc said, all excited; "do you see it?"

We looked all over, but couldn't see him anywhere. That was just how quickly it happened. Then, all of a sudden I could hear a voice, but I couldn't hear it plain, because the wind was blowing the other way and the rain was making such a racket on the porch roof. The voice was all mixed up with the wind and it sounded spooky and gave me the creeps.

For a couple of seconds nobody said anything.

CHAPTER XV

TELLS ABOUT AN ACCIDENT

THE next thing I knew there was a loud splash and I heard the spring-board down on the shore crack, and when I looked there I could see it jumping up and down.

I knew what that meant.

"Who dived?" Westy shouted; "he must be crazy! He can't make it. Hurry up, let's get a boat out! Do you hear the voice now?"

After that everything seemed to happen all in a jumble. Westy and Doc and I ran to the landing and got one of the boats off, while the fellows up on the porch shouted to the fellow who had dived to come back, because he couldn't make it. I heard one fellow yell, "You're crazy; come back while you can! They're getting a boat out!"

I was so busy helping to push the boat into deep water that I didn't think any more about the fellow who dived, only I supposed he must have turned back. I heard the fellows shouting, but I didn't pay any attention. Out on the lake I could

hear the voice now calling help, and it sounded creepy, like a person trying to call while he's gargling.

Doc said, "It's all up with him; hurry, anyway."

It was pretty hard getting the boat started, because the wind kept blowing it ashore, and we had to pull and tug for all we were worth. I got in back of it and shoved out till I was beyond my depth, then jumped in while Dock and Westy pulled for all they were worth, trying to get her ahead.

I guess most everybody at the camp was up on the porch by now, and there were a lot crowding on the spring-board.

"Pull hard," Doc said; "the next cry will be the last one; I know the sound."

Just then we heard a long cry, but it didn't say any word, just h—e—e—

And then it stopped.

Doc said, "Pull hard anyway; you steer her, Roy. Right over there—a little to the left—you can see the canoe."

I looked over there and saw it upset and no one was near it.

I can't tell you all about what happened. I

tried and tore up three pages. Because it makes me all excited myself, as you might say. I can hear that crowd on the porch shoutng just as plain as on that very day it happened. And every time it rains and it's dark and windy, it reminds me of it too. The next thing I knew we were right close beside two fellows and Westy was holding them and shouting, *"Let go, I've got him!"*

The fellow who wouldn't let go was Skinny.

I can't tell you about how he looked—honest, I just can't tell you. But there was blood on his face just the same as I saw in the dream—as sure as I'm sitting here, there was. He had hold of the camping fellow's mackinaw jacket with his teeth and the fellow's mouth was stretched wide open and Skinny's hand was clutching his teeth and chin and holding his head above water that way. It wasn't like any rule for holding a drowning fellow, anyway, no rule *I* ever heard of. Even now I can see that skinny little white hand straining to hold that mouth and chin, and afterward I saw how there was a cut across Skinny's fingers where the fellow's teeth had pressed. Skinny's arm was shaking just like a rope shakes when it's pulled too tight and his eyes were staring and crazy.

While I kept the boat steady, Doc leaned out and pressed Skinny's jaws so as to make his teeth let go. And even then when we dragged him in over the stern, he had a piece of mackinaw jacket in his mouth.

I said, "Skinny, don't act crazy, he's saved," but he only sat on the back seat trembling all over as if he had a fit. It wasn't because he was cold, it was just because he was excited and crazy like.

I didn't notice the camping fellow much after I saw that he was alive and that Doc had him breathing all right. Westy took the oars but I couldn't help him on account of Skinny. And I couldn't do much for Skinny either. He was gone clean out of his head and started screaming, *"I did it; I did it!"*

I said, "Yes, you did it; try to be quiet and get rested now. Can't you see he's all right?"

"I held him up till you came," he panted; "I'm a hero. I want to go and be all by myself, I do."

I said, "Hsh, Skinny, listen—"

"He called me!" Skinny shouted; *"he called me* out loud!"

"I know," I said, "and you went. Sure, you're a hero." But of course, I knew the fellow never

called him at all. Anyway, maybe the wind made it sound that way to him.

He just sat there shaking all over and staring wild, "Three times," he panted out, "and that's the last—I—I got my hand in his mouth before —before—he said it—I did. That's the way murderers do—it is. I did it. Even I know how to strangle—I do. I'm a hero!"

I said, "Listen here, Alf, you're a wonder—"

"I—I—I—could *kill* you if I wanted to!" he screamed; "I can do anything—I can sneak—stalk—I can take things out of your pocket—I can choke people—I—"

That's just the way he went on and I saw he had gone all to pieces, maybe from the strain, and didn't know what he was saying. I just put my arm around him and I could feel that he was shaking all over, but it wasn't anything like a chill.

He kept saying, "I want to be alone by myself now."

I said, "Alf, listen a minute—*please*. You can go and be alone by yourself. You can go in our patrol cabin and I'll chase all the fellows out. I know how you feel. It was wonderful, Alf. Try to get quieted down now. You saved him."

"I—I can *bite*," he said.

I said, "Yes, I know; but try to take it easy now, because we're coming to shore. You have to act like a real hero."

But as soon as we came into shallow water he jumped out of the boat and scooted around the edge of the pavilion, like a wild animal. In a couple of seconds everybody in camp was around the boat, waiting to hear what the camp doctor said. As soon as I knew that the fellow was going to be all right, I went away to find Skinny. No one else seemed to miss him.

Pretty soon I heard a voice calling, "What's your hurry, Blakeley?" and I turned around and saw Bert Winton hurrying to catch up to me.

"I'm going to look for that kid," I said.

For about half a minute we walked along together, and then he said kind of quiet, sort of, "Do you think he's crazy?"

"I don't think he's exactly crazy," I said; "but he's all gone to pieces."

"He sounded crazy from the shore," he said.

"He didn't know what he was saying, anybody could tell that," I answered him.

"What did he do?" Winton asked me.

"Oh, he just nearly killed him trying to save him," I said.

"Hmph," Winton said.

"He'll be all right," I told him.

"Most of the fellows here think he's crazy," he said. "Last night they could hear him way out on the lake, boasting about his father stealing silver. 'Better keep your watch under your pillow and let Uncle Jeb take care of your coin,' that's what all the fellows are saying."

"Is that what *you're* saying?" I said.

"I'm not saying anything," he shot back.

"You saw what he just did," I told him.

"I saw what he just did," he said.

"You don't seem to be very excited about it," I shot back at him again.

"What's the good of getting excited?" he said.

"Do *you* think he's crazy and a thief?" I asked him.

"I think he may be a little crazy—at times," he said. "As to being a thief—" And then he screwed his mouth up, but didn't say anything more.

"A hero-thief," I said, kind of sarcastic, for the way he talked made me mad.

"He's sure a hero," he said.

"I'm glad you think so," I told him. "Heroes aren't usually thieves, are they?"

"Not as a rule," he said, kind of quiet and all the while kicking a stone.

"Well then," I said.

"Well then," he said too.

"Well then, there you are," I spoke up.

"Well then, here we are," he said, with an awful funny smile, "and the question is, where is the little skinny fellow?"

"I guess I can find him without any help from you," I said.

Then he walked away. Cracky, maybe I couldn't understand Skinny very well, but I sure couldn't understand Bert Winton at all.

CHAPTER XVI

TELLS ABOUT SKINNY'S ABSENCE

I HUNTED for Skinny for a couple of hours, but I couldn't find him. I went all the way into Leeds for I couldn't think where else he'd be, if he wasn't around camp. But he wasn't in the village, that was sure, and I began to get kind of anxious, because I knew the crazy state he was in, and besides he was soaked from being in the lake.

It cleared up nice and sunny while I was gone and when I got back to camp, everybody was getting ready for supper. I had to change my clothes, they were so wet, and while I was doing it Mr. Ellsworth came into our cabin and asked me if I knew where Skinny was.

I said, "No, I don't; I hiked all over looking for him, but I couldn't find him. That's how I got so wet. I should think Connie would have his patrol out hunting for him."

Mr. Ellsworth and I walked over to supper together, and he seemed kind of worried. "I'm

afraid this thing has jarred his balance a little," that's what he said.

"One reason he wants to be alone," I said, "is because he hasn't got any friends."

"I think his patrol is very proud of him," he said; "the whole camp is proud of him."

"They're proud of what he *did;* they couldn't help being proud of it," I said. "But they're not proud of *him.* Why don't they take him in and make friends with him? He's won the gold cross for them; gee, the least they can do is to show some interest in him. Are they ashamed of him? They don't even trust him, that's what *I* think."

Mr. Ellsworth said, "Yes, he's won the gold cross for them; no doubt of that."

"Yes," I said, "and where is he now? He's gone off so's he can be alone. One fellow around here says everybody in camp thinks he's a thief."

"Oh, I guess he didn't say just that, Roy," Mr. Ellsworth said, very nice like, "but we've got to have a little talk with Skinny about the way he talks—the things he says. He's a very queer youngster. They see he's different from the rest of us, that he's out of the slums and, well, they don't understand him, that's all."

"He just blurts everything out," I said, "that's all."

"Well, he *mustn't,*" Mr. Ellsworth laughed, "especially when he's out on the lake. His tirade to-day, after the rescue, sounded very strange. The boys are not used to hearing talk about picking pockets and stealing silverware. They don't understand it."

"I should worry about them," I said; "Skinny's just a kind of a freak. Look at the way he wanted to go away and be alone by himself. Doesn't that prove it?"

"Well," Mr. Ellsworth said, "it will be more to the point if he comes back all right."

"It would be more to the point if the Elks were out hunting for him," I said. You can bet I wasn't afraid to say it—to Mr. Ellsworth or anybody else.

"I think we'll have to organize a search if he doesn't show up soon," Mr. Ellsworth said. Then neither of us said anything for a few seconds.

"How about the camping fellow?" I asked him.

"They took him home in a skiff," Mr. Ellsworth said; "he wanted to go, so three of the boys rowed him across after the weather cleared."

"I don't see how Skinny held him up—I just don't," I told Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "No, it was marvelous any way you look at it. I think Skinny nearly broke the poor fellow's jaw. There is wonderful power in frantic desperation."

Anyway, at supper all the fellows were shouting about Skinny. Everybody said he'd have the gold cross—even Uncle Jeb and Mr. Elting. And you never hear Mr. Elting saying much about those things till he's sure. All the Elks were shouting about the gold cross and where they'd keep it, just as if it was theirs. Hardly any of them said anything about Skinny.

At camp-fire it was just the same only more so, and I noticed across the fire that Mr. Ellsworth and a couple of the scoutmasters were talking together and I guessed they were deciding about getting a searching party started.

Pretty soon Bert Winton came over and squatted down alongside of me. "Kind of hot on the other side," he said, "flame blows right in your face. These fellows all in your patrol?"

I told him, "Yes," and then I said, "mostly we hang together."

"Good idea," he said; "any news of the little codger?"

"*I* couldn't find him," I said, kind of mad like.

"Guess he didn't go far," he said; "just wanted to get off by himself and think it over. Natural enough. Didn't hit his tracks, did you?"

I said, "Nope."

"Stole a march on you," he said.

"Oh, sure, he stole a couple of marches," I said; "maybe he even stole a look."

"Well, he stole away," Winton said; "he'll be back."

Cracky, I couldn't make heads or tails of that fellow. Somehow I kind of liked him—I couldn't help it.

CHAPTER XVII

TELLS ABOUT CAMP-FIRE AND SKINNY

All of a sudden I heard a fellow shout, "There he is!" And then everbody around the camp-fire set up a howl.

Skinny was standing in the dark away from the fire, just as if he was afraid to come in among the fellows. His uniform was all wrinkled and stained and he looked even worse than he did other times. There was a long mark on his cheek where I guess the gold dust twin had scratched him, and he didn't have his hat or his shoes. *Good night,* he didn't look much like pictures you see of heroes. But he was all quieted down, that was one thing. I guess he was played out.

"There he is, the crazy little Indian!" a fellow shouted; "come in here, Skinny, till we get our fists on you. You've won the gold cross, you little spindle shanks!"

Then a lot of fellows shouted, "Hurrah for Skinny! Come here, Skinny, till we pat you on the back—you little water snake!" They didn't

even seem to know his last name or his front name either, and it made me mad.

"You trot right over here to mamma, Skinny," Vic Norris of the Elks shouted; "we'll take care of *you.*"

The kid was smiling, all confused, as if he didn't know *what* to do.

"Come ahead over; don't be scared," Connie Bennett shouted. So then Skinny went over, kind of bashful and staring all around him, and sat down with the Elk patrol.

Westy leaned over and whispered to me, *"Can you beat that?* His own patrol leader telling him not to be afraid to go and sit down with his own patrol! I'll fix that bunch," he said.

Then he stood right up and shouted—oh, boy, you ought to have heard him. He said, "Let's give three cheers for Alfred McCord, of the 1st Bridgeboro Troop, B. S. A., the second fellow to win the gold cross in his troop and the first one to win it in his patrol—the *only* one in his patrol that *could* win it!"

Oh, boy, that was some whack.

Well, you should have heard the fellows shout for Skinny. Merry Christmas! but that was some noise. They all stood up, the Elks too, and gave

him the biggest send-off *I* ever heard at Temple Camp. Even the scoutmasters and the trustees joined in and old Uncle Jeb kept shouting, *"Hooo—ray! Hooo—ray!"* Cracky, you would have laughed if you'd heard him. Oh, bibbie! when Temple Camp once gets started, the west front in France is Sleepy Hollow compared to it.

And oh, didn't it make me feel good to see Skinny. He looked as if he was going to start to run away, but Connie had him by the collar, and all the Elks were laughing, and now I could see they were proud of him, anyway.

Then Mr. Ellsworth held up his hand and as soon as the racket died down, he began to speak. This is what he said, because Mr. Barrows (he's a trustee) knows shorthand, and afterwards he gave it to me all written out to copy in our troop book. He said:

"Scouts, you have heard that speech is silver and silence is golden. I think this kind of shouting is highest grade sterling silver. It is chunks of silver, as one might say. But since this is a matter of the gold cross, I ask for just a moment or two of golden silence, while I speak to you. I see about me, scouts from Ohio, and Michigan, and New Hampshire—

"And Hoboken!" Pee-wee piped out. Jiminy, that kid is the limit.

"Yes, and Hoboken," Mr. Ellsworth said, trying not to laugh. "I speak to all of you from north, south, east and west—"

"One of them has been up in an airplane, too!" Pee-wee yelled.

"I speak to all scouts here," Mr. Ellsworth said, "whether they come from the heavens above or from the earth beneath or from the waters under the earth. That will include any scout who may happen to have been in a submarine. Will that do?" And he gave Pee-wee an awful funny look.

Then he said, "I want to thank you all for the tribute you have paid our troop in its moment of pride and honor. This little scout is brand new, he is not even out of the tenderfoot class, and the gold cross award for heroism will be his. I think that every scout of his patrol should thrill with pride at this thought. I dare say we all find him a little strange, *we* as well as *you*, and I'm afraid he is a kind of law unto himself—if you understand what I mean. But this beautiful cross which will soon be his will bring him closer to us all, I am sure. It is said in our Handbook that a

scout is a brother to every other scout, so he has many thousands of brothers all over this broad land. The gold cross is very bright. Look in it and you will see your face reflected. You will see the scout smile, and that is brighter than any gold.

"The best of all, it reflects honor—honor on him who wears it, honor on his patrol, on his troop and on every troop and scout in this whole great camp. And Alfred McCord has brought us this honor. Come here, Alf, my boy, and let me shake your hand."

Wasn't that a peach of an address?

But I noticed that Skinny didn't move. He just stood there close to Connie Bennett. He was shaking all over and he was smiling and he was crying. I saw Hunt Ward jump up and give him a rap on the back and he was so little and so thin, that it kind of made him stagger.

Then he said, "Can't I stay here with them?"

Oh, boy, wasn't I glad!

CHAPTER XVIII

TELLS ABOUT MY TALK WITH BERT WINTON

BELIEVE *me,* that was *some* night. I guess I knew how Skinny felt when he scooted off, because after camp-fire I felt just that same way myself. Christmas! I don't know how it feels to win the gold cross, and I guess I never will either, but just the same, after camp-fire that night, I just felt as if I wanted to go and be by myself—I can't tell you why.

It's fine hanging around the camp-fire after it's died down, but they're pretty sure to chase you off to bed if you do that. It's a danger zone, believe *me*. Anyway, I know a peach of a place on a big rock near the shore. You just go along under the spring-board and pass the boat landing and follow the path. So I went there and pretty soon Hunt Ward came along on his way to the Elk cabin, and he stopped a couple of minutes and talked to me.

"Well," he said, "we've got that little old medal in our patrol."

"You've got Alf in your patrol, you mean," I said.

"I don't know whether you could exactly say he *earned* it," he said; "because he was crazy and didn't know what he was doing."

"I wish I knew some more fellows who were crazy like that," I told him.

"You seem to be kind of sore at us, Foxy," he said. Most of them called me Foxy, because I'm leader of the Silver Foxes.

"There's a difference between a mascot and a regular friend," I told him. "You fellows treat Skinny just as if he was a sort of a mascot. Why don't you take him in with you, just like you would any other fellow?"

"He's a queer little duck," Hunt said.

"That isn't any reason why you shouldn't take him in. I'm not saying you haven't—*now*. And I'm glad if you have, that's sure. You ought to read him the Handbook and teach him some of the other stuff—the laws and all that. Gee, that's the least you could do, now he's won the cross for you."

"Grandpa Foxy," he said, and then he went along toward the Elk cabin.

I was just going to start off to our own cabin when I heard footsteps. It seemed as if someone might be stealing along, and first I thought it

might be Skinny. I was glad it wasn't, because I wanted him to stay in with his own fellows now and not bother with me.

It was Bert Winton.

"H'lo, Blakeley," he said, in that quiet kind of a way he has; "I thought everybody was in bed."

"I see *you're* not in bed," I told him, kind of grouchy.

He said, "Me? Oh, no, I always prowl around after fox trails and things. I got on one fox trail, didn't I? Bet the kid won't sleep to-night, hey?"

"I bet I won't sleep either," I said; "and that's why I'm here."

"Kind of like the kid, don't you?" he said.

I said, "Yes, and that's more than *you* can say."

He just looked at me a minute and then he sat down on the stone alongside of me, and he broke a stick off a bush and began marking on the ground with it. Then he said, kind of as if he didn't take much interest—he said, "Actions speak louder than words; did you ever hear that?"

"Sure," I said, "but I'd like to know what that has to do with Skinny."

He just kept pushing the stick around, then he said, "If you're such a good friend of his, instead

of trotting all around and sticking your face into every cabin like an old maid hunting for a thimble, why didn't you find his trail and follow it?"

I said, "I don't know why I didn't."

"If you thought he just went off to be by himself, why didn't you trail him and make sure?" he asked me, all the while very friendly and quiet like.

"Well, if he wanted to be by himself," I said, "why should I track him?"

"Why should you hunt for him at all, then?" he said.

"Just because I choose to," I told him.

"That's a good reason," he said.

"It's all the reason you'll get," I blurted out.

"All right," he said, very nice and polite, "only then don't go around thinking you're a better friend to him than I am. I know this camp and I know those fellows across the lake and I know page fifty-one of the Handbook, and I've seen the kid once or twice."

"I suppose you think I don't know what's on page fifty-one of the Handbook," I said, getting mad; "it's the tracking badge—pathfinding—so there. And I see you have it on your sleeve, too."

"That's where it belongs," he said.

"Well, then, if you think it was so important to track him, why didn't you track him?" I blurted at him, for I was good and mad.

"I did," he said.

CHAPTER XIX

TELLS ABOUT A VISIT FROM ACROSS THE LAKE

Now at last I knew for sure that I hated that fellow. And I said to myself, "You can bet I'll never have anything more to do with *him*."

When I got to our cabin all the fellows were asleep, except Westy, and I said to him, "Do you know that scout who's patrol leader in the Ohio troop?"

He said, "You mean Winton?"

"That's him," I said; "I hate him so much that it makes me hate the whole state of Ohio. I wouldn't even go canoeing on the Ohio River."

He didn't say anything—I guess he was sleepy. "I even hate the Baltimore and Ohio railroad," I said.

The next morning just as we were going in for a swim, we saw the canoe coming across the lake again. When it got near enough, we could see that another fellow was in it. We all went over to the landing to ask him how his pal was getting along. Right away he asked if he could see Mr. Ellsworth.

I said, "Sure you can; I guess he's in the tepee, writing."

I felt sort of glad, because I thought probably it meant something good for Skinny. All morning he was sure one hero, and at the time the camper came he was off with the Elks somewhere, stalking I guess, and I was mighty glad of it.

The tepee is a little tent where the scoutmasters always go when they want to be alone, so as to write up troop stuff. Nobody ever bothers them in there unless it's important, and even then only one fellow goes.

I said, "Sure, come ahead, I'll find him for you."

He was a pretty nice fellow, I could see that, even if he *was* a tenderfoot, and he spoke mighty friendly, sort of, to me.

He said, "You have a wonderful little life saver here—with a bull dog grip."

"It's more than a grip," I said, "it's a regular suitcase. He's going to get the highest award we have, too."

"Bully for him," he said, "we're going to let him know what we think about it, too."

"Scouts aren't allowed to take anything for things like that," I told him.

"Well," he said, "we heard him shouting on

the lake the other night that he'd like to own a canoe, so we're going to give him ours when we go away next week."

"Oh, boy!" I said. Then I just happened to think to say, "Did you hear all he shouted out on the lake? Because," I said, "he's kind of—kind of freakish, sometimes."

"He's a little wonder, that's what he is," he said.

When we got to the tepee, Mr. Ellsworth jumped up and shook hands with him and said, "Glad to see you, sit down. Sit down too, Roy."

So we both sat down on the bench, and I don't know, it seemed to me as if the fellow was sort of uncomfortable, as if he'd rather I wouldn't be there. But he didn't say anything about it.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "Your friend had a very narrow escape. Canoes are bad things in storms. You should be careful." And then he gave him some mighty good advice in that nice way he has.

The camping fellow said he'd come to thank the little fellow, that's what he called him, and to tell Mr. Ellsworth how they both felt about it. He said they'd never forget about it, and he wanted to know if there was anything they could do.

"Absolutely nothing," Mr. Ellsworth said. "All awards and tokens of recognition are attended to right here among ourselves."

For about half a minute the fellow didn't say anything and I thought he was thinking about how to spring that about the canoe. Because it wasn't easy after what Mr. Ellsworth said. Then he said —I can tell you almost just the very words—because Mr. Ellsworth helped me with this part. He said:

"There's a little matter I want to speak about, Mr. Ellsworth, and it isn't easy. My friend didn't want me to speak about it at all, for he was afraid you might misunderstand us."

Mr. Ellsworth said, awful friendly like, "I will try not to."

Then he said, kind of smiling, "I suppose we can trust this good little scout not to repeat our talk to anyone."

Mr. Ellsworth began to laugh, then he said, "Oh, yes, indeed; all good little scouts are to be trusted. That's what Roy, here, would say is their middle name. Am I right, Roy?"

I guess that made it kind of easy for the fellow, for he started right in, though I could see it was hard for him to say it. He said, "My pal had

quite a little sum of money in his jacket, which we can't seem to find now. It was buttoned into a flap pocket. He thought, or rather *I* thought, that perhaps it had been taken from him and laid away for safe keeping. Or perhaps it may have fallen into the water and gone down. There's a lot of valuable stuff under the water these days." I think he said that just so's to kind of make a joke about what he was saying, so as maybe it wouldn't seem so serious like. Anyway, he was awfully nice. "It seems pretty contemptible to be talking about money," he said, "after my pal's life was saved by you folks, but it's just because the money has to be paid out pretty soon that he's worrying about it. He didn't want me to come over and ask, but I told him I was going to, anyway. No harm in that, I guess."

"None whatever," Mr. Ellsworth said; "how much money was there?"

The fellow said a little over two hundred, but they weren't sure exactly how much.

Mr. Ellsworth raised his eyebrows in that way he has and said, "Isn't that a good deal of money for two young fellows to take camping?"

The camper said, "Yes, I guess it is, but we're

pretty punk campers, I suppose, any way you look at it."

Mr. Ellsworth said, "Just wait a minute," and he went away.

The camping fellow started to say how it made him feel mean and contemptible to come over and ask about the money, and he guessed it was probably in Davy Jones' locker, anyway.

Pretty soon Mr. Ellsworth came back and said, "I'm very sorry, my young friend, but no sum of money was found on your companion. It it had been, it would either have been restored to him or held by the camp authorities through oversight. I have just made inquiries of them. The boy who saved your friend is not in camp at present, but I think I can answer for him, that he did not find it. To make sure, I will ask him when he returns and one of the boys will row over and let you know."

I could see the fellow seemed kind of disappointed, but anyway, he was mighty nice about it.

CHAPTER XX

TELLS ABOUT THE LOSS OF SOME MONEY

Mr. Ellsworth asked me to come back and get some letters to put in the mail box, so after I saw the gold dust twin start off I went back to the tepee, and just as I was going inside I saw Connie Bennett and Bert McAlpin and Hunt Ward and Stut Moran and Skinny coming down the hill in back of the tepee. Skinny was smiling all over and I could see the wrinkles at the ends of his mouth like I always could when he smiled. That's when you could see how thin he was. I shouted that I thought Mr. Ellsworth wanted to see him and he started to run, only Connie grabbed him by the collar, just for fun, and held him back. I heard him say, "Take your time, we're all in on this."

By that I knew that Skinny expected Mr. Ellsworth was going to give him the gold cross. I didn't blame *him* for thinking so, but the others might have had better sense, because it's usually a week, anyway, before an honor medal comes.

Anyway, they all came down into the tepee and

stood looking around as if they expected to see the gold cross on the table. Hanged if I don't think Connie had n idea that Mr. Ellsworth would hand it to *him,* he looked so important like.

Mr. Ellsworth just went on and finished the letter he was writing, then he said, "Alfred, our rescued mariner from across the lake can't find a roll of money he had in his mackinaw. He thinks it may have gone down in the lake. Don't happen to know anything about it, do you?"

I have to admit that I felt sort of funny and I looked pretty close at Skinny. He just stood there staring and I could see by his neck that he was breathing hard and all nervous sort of. Then Mr. Ellsworth asked him again, very pleasant like he always spoke to him. But Skinny didn't say a word, only stood there staring and he gulped as if he was trying to swallow something. Gee, I was all kind of shaky myself now, because I saw Mr. Ellsworth looked at him in a funny way—like a fellow looks at the sun—kind of. As if he was studying him—*you* know.

Then Connie said, "Why in the dickens don't you speak up, Skinny? If you know anything about it, why don't you say so? Do you want to get us all in Dutch?"

I could see that Skinny was just trying as hard as he could to speak, but couldn't on account of that lump in his throat. I know it was none of my business, but I just couldn't keep still any longer, so I said right out:

"The reason he doesn't speak is because he *can't*. Haven't you got sense enough to see that? He thought Mr. Ellsworth was going to hand him the medal and you were crazy enough to let him think so. That's one reason he's all rattled. So I'll answer for him and I hope that'll satisfy you. He hasn't got the money and he never saw it and he never heard of it. It's down at the bottom of Black Lake, that's where it is. Don't you suppose he had something better to do with himself when he was saving that gold dust twin, than to be going through his pockets?"

"I'm sure I would," Vic Norris said.

"*You!*" I said, "you couldn't even have held him up in the water and you know plaguy well you couldn't—there's not one of you that could. If you thought more about what he was doing out there in all that storm with his teeth in that fellow's sweater and his hand being blamed near bitten off, it would be better for *you*. All *you're* thinking about is getting the gold cross into your

patrol. What do you suppose *he* cares about money—a fellow that can do things like that? It's these jelly-fish that go camping with a whole savings bank in their pockets and no shovel to dig a drain ditch with—that's the kind that think about money! You make me sick. Turn your pockets inside out, Alf, and let them see what you've got—go ahead!"

All the while Mr. Ellsworth kept saying, "Shh, shh, Roy," but what did I care? Even he couldn't stop me.

"What's *he* got to do with it, anyway?" Connie said to Mr. Ellsworth, "I don't see as it's any of *his* business."

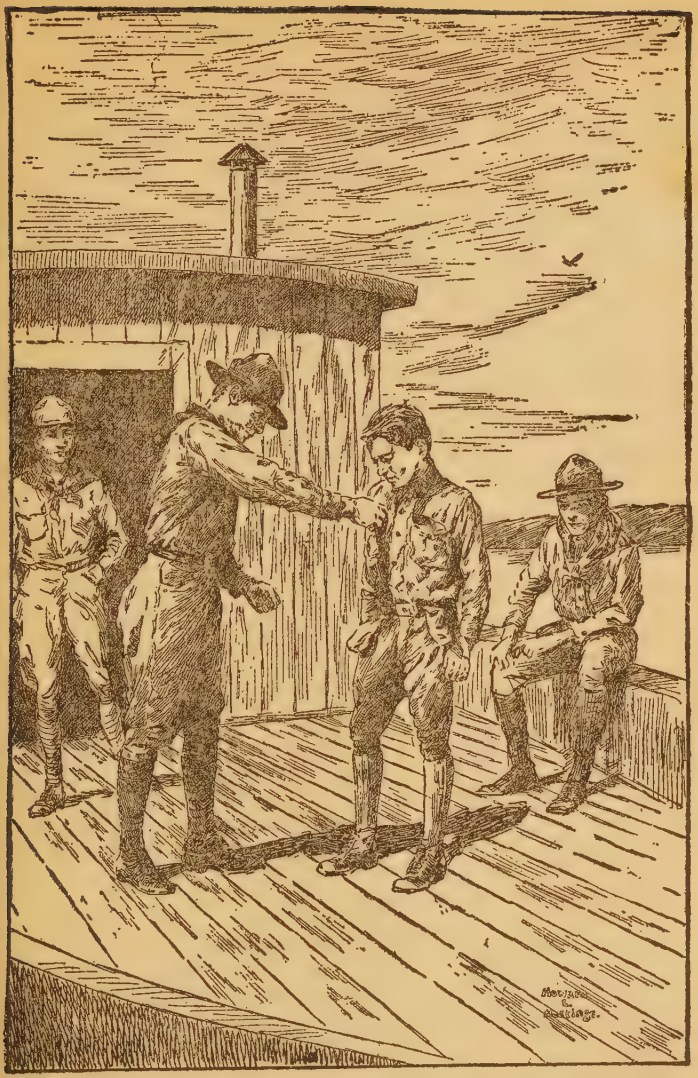
"Well," I said, "I'll *make* it my business. You've got the kid so nervous and scared, that he can't even find his pockets, he—"

"Just a moment, Roy," Mr. Ellsworth said. "You mustn't forget yourself. You have done our friends across the lake an injustice."

"When I get through doing Skinny *justice,* it will be time enough to think of *them,"* I said. Oh, boy, I was mad.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "We have no wish to search Alfred, Roy. Why all this anger?"

"Because I've heard enough hints and insinua-



I STEPPED OVER AND PULLED HIS POCKETS INSIDE OUT.

tions around this camp, that's why!" I said. Jiminy, I could just feel my voice tremble.

Poor Skinny was fumbling at one of his pockets and he was so scared and nervous, that he couldn't get his hand in even. So I just stepped over and pulled his pocket inside out.

"Four pennies," I said, "see?" Poor but honest, hey, Alf?" And I gave him a good rap on the shoulder. I guess it made him feel good, because he smiled at me even though he did look scared.

Then one after another I pulled all his other pockets inside out, and last I turned out the flap pockets in his khaki shirt. Just as I did that, a key fell out.

"Four cents and a key," I said; "now are you satisfied?"

"We never said he had it," Hunt Ward spoke up.

"Well, now you can see he hasn't anyway," I said.

All the while Mr. Ellsworth waited just as if he didn't have much use for all this business, but just the same wouldn't interfere. That's always the way he is. So now he said, very pleasant:

"I think we're having a sort of tempest in a

teapot, Roy. No one has made any accusations. Suppose you let me say a word. It wasn't at all necessary to perform this operation on Alfred. Let me see this key, Alf, my boy."

Skinny handed the key to Mr. Ellsworth and he screwed up his face, sort of funny, and looked at it. Then he said, "Hmph, it's a Yale key, belonging to a padlock, eh? What key is it, my boy?"

Skinny could hardly speak he was so scared. Even I felt sort of shaky—I don't know why.

Skinny just said, "I found it."

"Here in camp, you mean?" Mr. Ellsworth said, just as nice as I ever heard him talk—awful pleasant and easy, like.

"On the boat," Skinny said, "the day I found the money. It was right on the deck."

"That was the money he gave you," I said. I just couldn't help saying it.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "Now, Roy, you must let me do the talking. Just be quiet a minute.

I said, "Excuse me."

"Now, Alf," Mr. Ellsworth said, "why didn't you give me this key, eh?"

Skinny kept breathing, but could hardly speak,

Then he said, "I put it in the other pocket. I forgot. Mostly I don't put things there."

"I see," Mr. Ellsworth said, just as if he believed every word. "You don't know what key it is, I suppose, Alf?"

"No, sir," he said. And then he gulped and seemed terribly scared and excited.

"All right," Mr. Ellsworth said, "just leave it with me. I expect I shall be able to pin the cross on you in a few days, Alf. Have a little patience."

Then, all of a sudden Skinny blurted out, "Am I a hero?"

"Yes, indeed," Mr. Ellsworth said, and he smiled at him and patted his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXI

TELLS ABOUT MY TALK WITH MR. ELLSWORTH

AFTER they were gone, Mr. Ellsworth told me that I shouldn't get so excited about nothing. I have to admit that's the way I often do.

I said, "Do you know what that's a key to?"

He said, "It's a key to a padlock. I have an idea that perhaps it fits the padlock on that locker in the house-boat—the one that was always locked."

Jiminy, I never thought of that until just then when he spoke about it. It made me feel awfully queer. Anyhow, I guessed right off that he was right, because probably it fell out of Lieutenant Donnelle's pocket along with the change that he spilled all over the deck. There was a kind of a lump in *my* throat now.

I said, "Skinny gave you the money so we ought to believe him when he says he just put the key in another pocket and forgot about it."

"Why, surely," he said, "I'm not suspecting him of anything. Neither is anyone else. The

only thing that puzzles me is, how the key happened to be on the deck where he found it. We swabbed the decks so thoroughly before leaving Bridgeboro. One of our boys might have dropped some change and never known it. But how did the key happen to be there? We know how it happened in Alfred's pocket, but how did it happen on the deck? We scouts claim to be observant, and yet that key was right on the deck from Bridgeboro all the way down to St. George. That's the queer thing."

Oh, boy, didn't I feel guilty. Especially I felt guilty because Mr. Ellsworth was so nice and pleasant about it. Because all the while I knew where that key came from, and it seemed just like lying not to tell. Gee, I was kind of sorry now that I promised Lieutenant Donnelle that I would never tell about him coming there. I couldn't say anything, so I just kept still.

All the while Mr. Ellsworth kept looking at the key and thinking and humming a tune to himself. Pretty soon he said, "You don't happen to know where Alfred went when he disappeared, do you, Roy?"

I said, "No, I don't; all I know is I couldn't find him."

"He was gone for four or five hours," he said, very slow, as if he was sort of thinking.

I guess I felt just about the same as Skinny did now. Anyway, I was all shaky and it was hard for me to get started saying anything.

Then I said, "Mr. Ellsworth, Skinny went off because he was all scared and excited, and he wanted to be all alone by himself. Often I've felt that same way. I felt that way after I passed my second class tests. I don't deny he's kind of freaky. I think he just went off in the woods. You know yourself it's in the Handbook that trees are good companions. He just wanted to be alone. I bet he wasn't a hundred yards from camp. Skinny's kind of queer, you know that."

Then Mr. Ellsworth just laid down the key and put stamps on two or three letters and said, "All right, Roy, just see that these get mailed, will you?"

He didn't say what he was going to do and I guessed he wasn't going to do anything. And even suppose he did, what was the harm?

But just the same I felt awful queer and shaky. I guess maybe it was because I couldn't come right out and tell him the plain truth about that key.

CHAPTER XXII

TELLS ABOUT HOW I VISITED THE OHIO TROOP'S CABIN

ONE thing I was sure of, and that was that Skinny went away into the woods just to be alone by himself, like he said. I knew it was just like him to do that. Maybe you'll think it was funny for him to do that when it was raining, but already he was good and wet; you have to remember that. I said to myself, "I should worry about the key, because anyway, that had nothing to do with Skinny. But just the same I kept worrying about something, I don't know just what.

Pretty soon I made up my mind to do something that I didn't want to do. I went up the hill to where the Ohio troop bunked. They had one of the big troop cabins that holds two patrols. I guess they were a pretty fine troop, because they had everything fixed up dandy. One patrol was called the Royal Bengal Tigers, and the other was called the African Tigers, and both patrols wore yellow scarfs with black stripes, and all their

scout staffs had tigers' heads on them. Even when they dived from the spring-board they had a certain kind of a way of jumping, they called it the tiger spring, and nobody could get the hang of it. Some organization they had, that's what Mr. Ellsworth said. Every one of those fellows had a tiger claw hung around his neck. Oh, boy, that was some troop for you.

I asked one of the fellows for Bert Winton, and he came around from behind the cabin where he was spearing papers and leaves. I said, "*You* fellows ought to be called the gold dust twins, your two patrols I mean, because you're so plaguy particular—picking up leaves and everything. You'll be dusting the roof next."

He said, "We're a lot of old maids up here."

Then he climbed up on the cabin roof and sat on the peak and I scrambled up too, and sat down alongside of him. Honest, that fellow would squat in the funniest places. And always he had a stick with him.

"Nice and breezy up here," he said, in that quiet, easy sort of way he had, "and we can scan the horizon. Anything particular?"

I don't know, but I seemed to sort of feel that he knew what I was going to talk about, and I

guess he just scrambled up there so the other fellows wouldn't hear. Cracky, that fellow always had his wits about him, that's one sure thing.

I said, "I don't deny that I was kind of sore at you when you spoke to me down at the lake, and I can't tell whether I like you or not, because I can never make out what you really think. You've got to know what a fellow thinks before you know whether you like him or not, don't you?"

He said you sure did, and then he said, "Well, I know whether I like *you* or not, so it's all right."

"I don't care much whether you like *me,*" I said, "it's Skinny I'm thinking about. I know I like *him,* you can bet."

"And that's one reason I like you," he said; "because you like *him.* Ever notice how the cedar shingles shrink in a dry spell?"

I said I didn't know they were cedar.

"You can always tell cedar by the smell," he said, "and the S warp." Gee, I didn't even know what an S warp was.

Then I said right out—I said, "You told me that you tracked Skinny. Would you mind telling me where he went?"

For a minute he just kept moving the stick

around and then he said, "What would be the use of telling you?"

"Because I've got a reason and I want to know," I said. Then all of a sudden I knew why he climbed up there. It was partly so he could see all around and be sure no one was coming.

"Well, why do you want to know?" he said.

"Because I'm a friend of Skinny's, that's why," I said. Then I just blurted out, "I might as well tell you because, anyway, you're smarter than I am. They found a key on Skinny."

He just said, "When?"

"To-day," I said, "and it's probably a key to one of the lockers in our house-boat. Besides, that fellow who nearly got drowned had about a couple of hundred dollars on him."

"Humph, I thought so," Winton said.

I said, "Why?"

"Oh, just because," he said. "The day he came over to try to buy a fishing-pole he had a roll as big as a cobblestone with him. I suspected he'd lose it some day and that somebody would get blamed."

"Nobody is getting blamed," I said.

"No, but somebody is being suspected," he shot back.

"Well, he *did* lose it, I have to admit that much," I said.

"And that's all you're ever going to admit, hey?" he said, all the while moving the stick around on the roof.

"*You—bet—your—sweet—life,* that's all I'm ever going to admit," I said.

"Bully for you," he said; "you're about the best little scout I ever knew—next to Skinny."

"I can stick up for a friend, that's one thing," I said.

"Through thick and thin?" he asked me; "in spite of circumstantial evidence?"

"I should worry about circumstantial evidence," I told him. "Why should I care about circumstantial evidence? What did circumstantial evidence ever do for *me,* I'd like to know?"

Then he began to laugh. Gee, *I* didn't know what he was laughing at.

"Nothing would shake you, huh?" he said.

"Believe me, it would take an earthquake," I told him.

He looked all around and moved the stick around on the shingles, as if he was thinking.

Then he said, "Well, Skinny went over to the Hudson to that house-boat you fellows came up

on. He followed the old bed of Bowl Valley creek. Now don't get excited. He had as much right to go there as you have. He was all worked up, and he isn't just exactly right in his head, you know that. He just wanted to go home and be all alone by himself. The house-boat was the only home he knew. I didn't go on the boat, because I had no right to, and because there was no need to. I didn't know he had any key. I don't believe he hid anything, if that's what you're thinking about. I tracked him because I wanted to make sure he was safe and know what he was doing. As soon as I saw where he was headed for, I just beat it back. Nothing to it, Blakeley; don't worry."

"But now you know he had a key to a locker," I said.

He just said, "Well, what of it? I believe in him and there you are. I wouldn't care if he had keys to all the banks and safe deposit vaults in the United States."

Gee, it just kind of gave me a thrill, the way he spoke. I said, "Anyway, now I know that I like you. I ought to have had sense enough to know before."

Then he said, "You see, Blakeley, Skinny's a mighty queer little proposition. If it wasn't for

that scoutmaster you fellows have, I'd say he would never make a regular tip-top scout. But I think that Mr. What's-his-name—Ellsworth—is a wonder."

"Believe me, you said something," I told him.

"You know yourself," he said, "how that kid talks—shouts, I mean. Stealing silver, picking pockets! What are all these fellows to think? Most of the fellows here come from good folks. They don't understand a poor little codger like Skinny who is half crazy, because he's been half starved. You know yourself that he doesn't fit in here. I don't say he isn't going to. But I'm good at arithmetic, Blakeley—"

"Gee, you're a peach on tracking, too," I said.

"Well, and I know how to put two and two together," he said. "I knew, I just felt it in my bones, that that gold dust twin with his swell bathing suit and his waterproof mackinaw was going to lose his roll in the water. He carried it loose in his mackinaw pocket—a camper, mind you. He had a wad big enough to pay off the national debt, and I knew it would tumble out and it did. Skinny's one of those poor little codgers that's always unlucky. He happened to be there. He happened to have a key. He happened to go to

the house-boat. I got hold of his tracks just because I didn't want him to come to any harm while he was all worked up. The reason I didn't say anything about where he went was, because there are a whole lot of fellows in this camp that would put two and two together and get five. Understand? They'd say he went to hide Goldie's freight shipment of dollar bills. So I kept still. No harm in keeping still."

"Oh, cracky," I said, "but I like you. *I'm* keeping still about something too and you can bet I know how to keep my mouth shut. You can just bet I'd do anything for a friend, I would."

"Well, Skinny's got a good friend," he said.

"I didn't mean Skinny," I told him; "but he has got two good friends, anyway, and that's us, hey?"

He just said, "That's us," and then he slid right down the roof and jumped off the edge, awful funny like.

CHAPTER XXIII

TELLS ABOUT HOW I DID A GOOD TURN

THAT night Mr. Ellsworth wasn't at camp-fire and nobody knew where he was. All the time I had a funny feeling and I kept looking away from the fire and up the dark path to see if he was coming. I wasn't listening to the yarns at all.

And that night I didn't sleep—I just kind of felt that something was wrong. You know what I mean—I could just feel it in the air. The next morning was nice and bright and sunny and it seemed good, because there had been such a lot of rain lately. On my way over to breakfast, I stopped outside of Council Shack to read the bulletin board and see what was on for the day. I saw that the Elks were going stalking, and I was glad of that, because I knew Skinny liked stalking and I was glad he was with them at last. But just the same I felt kind of funny all the while I was having eats.

Afterward Artie Van Arlen (he's head of the Ravens) came and told me that Mr. Ellsworth

wanted to see me. I felt awful shaky. When I went into Council Shack he was sitting there all alone, and on the table right in front of him were the key and a lot of money all crunched up. Oh, but didn't Mr. Ellsworth look sober and serious.

He said very low as if he was all discouraged sort of, "Roy," he said, "you said something about going home for your sister's birthday?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I'd like to go down Friday and come back Monday. I'll go both ways by train, because that's quicker. I won't go if it isn't all right, but Marjorie is going to have a graduation party and they're going to have cocoanut cake, but anyway, I don't care so much about that." But, oh, boy, cocoanut cake is my middle name.

He said kind of slow, sort of, as if he was trying to make up his mind, "Well, Roy, I have an idea I'll let you take little McCord home. I don't know what else to do with him. I'm afraid he's too much for me. You see there are a good many boys who have to be considered. This isn't much of a place for a campaign of reformation," that's just what he said.

I said, "Are you mad at Skinny?"

He said, "I'm not mad, Roy, but I'm disheartened—a little hopeless, I'm afraid. I'm willing to

believe that he isn't just right in his head, but you see I can't help him; I'm not a doctor. His heroism is just a phase of his condition—he gets excited." That's just exactly what Mr. Ellsworth said, because I remember. Then he just lifted the money and dropped it again. It was all crunched up and damp sort of. Even where I stood near him I could smell how it was damp—you know, kind of mildewed.

"Alfred went down to the house-boat and hid this in the locker," Mr. Ellsworth said. "The key he had fitted the padlock and he must have known that. It's the right sum, as nearly as our friend across the lake remembered what he had; a little over two hundred dollars—seven dollars over. It's a miserable piece of business, Roy. I've been lying awake thinking it over all night, and I guess the best thing is to send the poor little wretch home. I'll send a letter to Mr. Benton about him. He'll get him into some institution. Maybe we can help him later. He's a little young for us." Then he began whistling to himself and drumming on the table.

Gee, I just stood there watching him and I didn't know what to say. I wondered what Bert Winton would say if he were there in my place.

Pretty soon I said, "Maybe I won't go home to my sister's birthday after all. Gee, I don't care so much about cocoanut cake anyway." He just didn't say anything, only kept drumming and whistling.

Then I said, "Did you say anything to Connie and the Elks?"

"No," he said, "but I shall; they'll have to know why I take him out of their patrol. They'll have to know what he did."

For a couple of minutes I couldn't say anything at all, and I just stood there gulping. One thing, no fellow can stand up and say that I ever talked back to Mr. Ellsworth—no, siree, no fellow can say that. But I just happened to think of something I wanted to say and so as soon as I could get started, I said it right out. This is what I said:

"Mr. Ellsworth, you always said a scout ought to stand up for a fellow through thick and thin—no matter what, because we're all brothers. And that's what Bert Winton thinks too. You know it says in the Handbook how we're all brothers. So Skinny is my brother and I should worry about my sister's racket. I've got a week's extra time due me at the camp, on account of

twelve snapshots last season.[1] So I've decided I'll give that to Skinny. I suppose that if the trustees say he's a thief they can send him away, no matter what. But the trustees don't have any meeting till next Wednesday. Maybe you'll be willing to tell me how I can go and register Skinny for that week of mine, because I don't know how to do it. If they want to say he's a thief let them go ahead and do it, but anyway, I should worry, they can't do it before next Wednesday and his week will be up then. And that will give me a chance to prove he didn't do it."

Mr. Ellsworth smiled, kind of, and shook his head, then he just sat looking at me. He said, "Roy, you ought to make a good lawyer when you grow up. You have put one over on your scoutmaster." I guess he wasn't mad. Anyway he said, awful nice like, "Go over to the Administration rooms in the Pavilion and see the record clerk. I won't interfere, my boy."

Gee, I was afraid I had made him sore, kind of,

[1] It was the rule at Temple Camp that any scout obtaining twelve good snapshots of birds, should have a week at camp in addition to his regular time, and this he could transfer to another scout as a good turn.—EDITOR.

but when I was going out I could see that he was just sitting there smiling at me.

Anyway, I bet you'd have done the same thing, if you'd been me.

CHAPTER XXIV

TELLS ABOUT HOW I TOLD A SECRET

I DON'T know how it got out, but inside of an hour every fellow in that camp knew. I bet Mr. Ellsworth never said anything. Maybe somebody went with him to the house-boat, or maybe somebody followed him, hey? But that's always the way it is at Temple Camp. Things get out.

The first thing I did was to go straight to see Bert Winton. I said, "I've got something to tell you. Can you come out alone?" Because, honest, that fellow was so popular he could never get away from his troop.

He said, "Come on out on the lake for a row."

So we went down to the landing and on the way a couple of fellows asked us if we'd heard about little Skinny. Anyway, we didn't pay any attention to them. One fellow who belonged in a troop from Boston, said, "I hear his patrol isn't going to bother with him any more."

I said to Bert—that's what I called him now—I said, "If that was true about the money, he wouldn't get the gold cross, would he?"

He said, "Nope, I guess not. Bravery doesn't count for much if a fellow is crooked. A highwayman is brave if it comes to that."

By that I knew that there's a lot to being a hero besides just being brave. Crinkums, I learned a lot of things from that fellow.

"But as long as he didn't do it, we should worry," I told him.

"That's us," he said.

When we got in the boat he took the oars and I sat in the stern and we just flopped around. There aren't many fellows out rowing mornings, because they're either tracking or stalking or cleaning up or maybe in for a dip. We could see the fellows busy about the cabins and hear them shouting and it made me feel awful sorry for Skinny, somehow. I didn't see him anywheres and I wondered where he was.

"Well, kid," Bert said (most always he called me that), "things get worser and worser, hey?"

"Do you still say he didn't do it?" I asked him; "I don't know *what* to think—look at that money."

"Ever take a good look at Skinny?" he said.

"Yes, but look at the money," I said.

"What do I want to look at it for?" he said;

"it ought to be hung out on the clothesline from all I've heard," he said.

Oh, boy, I was glad to hear him say that. "I wouldn't let any fellow in this camp except you call me 'kid,' " that's what I told him.

He just rowed around a little while, making dandy feather strokes, and then he said,

"Mr. Ellsworth didn't send that money over to Daniel Boone and Buffalo Bill yet, did he?"

I said, "You mean the gold dust twins? No, I don't think he did."

He said, "Well then, we've got to fix *that* and we can't ask Mr. E. not to do it. The tide's against us, kid; nobody's going to listen to us—not yet."

Then all of a sudden he sat up, got his oars set right, and oh, bibbie, you should have seen that fellow row. Every stroke he took he almost lay down flat, and oh, Christmas, couldn't he feather! Pretty soon we were over near the shore where the campers were. You could see their tent in among the trees.

"You're not going to tell *them,* are you?" I said.

But he didn't answer me, only just called out, "Hey, there, you wild Indians!"

One of them came through the woods and stopped and looked at us.

"Aren't you fellows going to the boat races down at Catskill?" Winton shouted. "You're going to miss the time of your lives if you don't. Better get a hustle."

"What time are they?" the camper shouted.

"Just about now," Bert shouted; "follow the old Bowl Creek bed and you'll get there quicker." Then he rowed away again. "That'll fix 'em for to-day," he said. "More than one way to kill a cat, hey?"

"There *are* some races, aren't there?" I asked him.

"Sure there are. That pair won't get back till midnight if they once hit Catskill."

I said, "You think of everything, don't you?"

"Now, Blakeley," he said, kind of more serious like, while he rowed around; "what are we going to do about it? Skinny didn't take the money, that's settled. All right then, who did? Nobody. Correct, be seated. All right then, what became of it? Mr. David Jones has it—our old college chum, Davy. It's at the bottom of Black Lake. How do I know all this? Because I know young

mackinaw jacket and because I know Skinny—see? Simple as eating pie."

"Gee, I've got to admit that eating pie is easy —especially mince," I told him.

He said, "All right, now I'm going to ask you a question and if you want to, you can say 'none of your business.' You told me you were keeping still about something. Has it anything to do with Skinny?"

"No, siree, it has not," I told him.

"All right, has it anything to do with the key?"

He shot it out just like that and oh, boy, wasn't I up in the air.

I said, "Maybe, kind of; yes, it has."

"Well then, you'd better tell me all about it," he said.

"I can't," I told him.

He said, "Oh, yes, you can."

"I promised I wouldn't," I said.

"Well then," he said, "we're all up in the air and I guess I can't help you much. I just thought that maybe two heads would be better than one, that's all. The money came out of the locker, that's sure. Any idea who it belongs to?"

For a minute I just sat there thinking, watching him dip his oars. He lifted them up and I could

hear the water drip from them, and then it would be all quiet till he did it again.

"I couldn't row ashore with one oar," he said; "I'd just have to scull. Two oars are better than one. Same with heads, Blakeley. Skinny's got till Wednesday. You've done a good job so far. I dare say the cross will be here by Wednesday. Ever try to row feather-stroke, Blakeley?"

Gee, I just couldn't help what I did—I just couldn't resist that fellow. I said, "Bert, you've got more brains than I have, that's one sure thing, and I can't help doing just what you say. I have to admit you're a wonder. I can't do any more alone, I can't. We have to be partners, kind of. Do you believe that about the Elks throwing him down? Bert, there was a fellow, a big fellow, and he's a son of the man that owns this boat, and he's a lieutenant." This is just what I told him. I said, "He's had a whole lot of dandy adventures and he took his uniform off to go fishing and hid it in the house-boat. And then when he came to get it, the boat was gone, because his father told our troop that we could use it. And after we got way down as far as Staten Island he sneaked on board one night and put his old clothes in the locker and took his uniform, and afterwards he dropped the

key when he tried to give me some money and Skinny found it. He found the money, too, and he gave it to Mr. Ellsworth, but he forgot about the key."

"He gave it to Mr. Ellsworth, huh?" Bert said.

"Yes, he did," I told him, "and that's why I'm going to stick to him through thick and thin, I am, I don't care what. So now I told and I have to be to blame."

"I'll be to blame," Bert said.

"But anyway, it's on account of Skinny," I said, "and a fellow doesn't know what to do all alone and I like you—gee, I like you a lot," I said it right out to him, just like that. He looked at me steady, but didn't say a word. And then I could feel my eyes all glistening and everything looked funny and all of a sudden I didn't know what I was saying at all. "You have to help me," I said, "because you're a regular scout, I can see that, and you bet I'd like to be just like you if I only could —I would—you can bet—that fellow had lots of adventures and he called me 'Skeezeks' and kind of laughed at me and kidded me along—but, anyway, maybe he's all right, hey? I guess it's his money, but anyway, you've got to help me—you have.

That's one sure thing, because Skinny's more important. Maybe he'll think that a little fellow like Skinny isn't important, and that's the hrouble, hey? Because he kind of punched me in the chest and laughed and said I was a good little sport. He said fellows by the name of Roy are all right."

All the while Bert Winton just sat there holding his oars out of the water and watching me steady, like a fellow watching a bird that he's been stalking.

Then he just said, "Well, I guess the big fellow was right."

CHAPTER XXV

TELLS ABOUT THE LETTER WE WROTE

ANYWAY, I don't care. Maybe you'll think I was wrong, but I don't care. I just had to tell that fellow. There was something about that fellow—I just can't tell you what it was.

So then we fixed everything all up while we were rowing around. What did I care about going tracking or stalking with my patrol? I should worry, they could get along one day without me, all right. We decided we'd write two letters to Lieutenant Donnelle and send one to his house and the other to Camp Dix in Wrightstown. We decided we'd write them that very day and hike into Catskill to mail them, so he'd be sure to get one wherever he was, in time for us to get an answer before next Wednesday.

Mr. Ellsworth went to Albany that day, because he had some business to attend to, but I knew he wouldn't do anything more about Skinny till he got back and that was one good thing. This was the letter that we decided to send because

I kept the first copy we made. We wrote it as if it came from me, but Bert Winton helped me.

Dear Lieutenant Donnelle:—

I hope you got back to camp all right and that Uncle Sam didn't get mad about it. I hope you're there now, so you'll surely get this. Anyway, I hope you'll admit that two heads are better than one, because I had to tell a fellow about you. That was because I guess he's the only one here who would help me.

There's a little fellow named Skinny McCord here, and he came from Bridgeboro with us. His name isn't really Skinny, but they call him that because he's that way, and one thing, you'd be sorry for him if you saw him. He talks kind of crazy sometimes, but that's because he lived in a tenement house and didn't have enough to eat. You know it's bad when you don't have enough to eat.

He swam out and saved a fellow's life and then there was a lot of money missing out of the fellow's pocket, and the fellows here think Skinny stole it.

The reason they think that is, because he found the key to your locker and he went to the house-boat. After that our scoutmaster went there with the key and found about two hundred dollars in your locker. I don't know whether it was in the old clothes you took off or not. But anyway,

the fellow who's a good friend of mine, says that maybe you'll send a letter right away as quick as you can and say that that money belongs to you. So will you please do that? I send you a stamped envelope so you'll be sure to do it.

Maybe a big fellow that has had a lot of adventures like you, and nearly lost his life a lot of times and did other dandy things, wouldn't think it was so much to save a fellow from drowning. But anyway, there's a medal called the gold cross that we have, and only a fellow can win it that has saved somebody's life. Maybe it isn't as much as the Distinguished Service Cross or that French Cross either, but anyway, its a big honor, that's sure, and we want Skinny to get it. So will you please answer this letter right away? Maybe you won't remember, because you have so many adventures, but I'm the fellow you met on the house-boat. So please answer so we will get it before next Wednesday. Maybe you've got a lot of important things to do, but if you could just see Skinny you'd answer quick. Because anyway, you were nice to me and you said I was a bully little pal. Maybe you won't remember it, but you did. Anyway, you bet I'll do something for you if I ever get a chance.

Your friend,

Roy Blakeley.

P. S. Be sure to send the answer as soon as you can.

We wrote the letter up on sunset rock near the camp and as soon as we got it finished we started off to Catskill, because it would go sooner than if we mailed it in Leeds. Just as we were passing the pavilion, we met Connie Bennett and Hunt Ward and Vic Norris.

Connie said, "Well, I suppose you know what your little birthday present put over on us." He called Skinny a birthday present, because Westy Martin and I gave Skinny to the Elks when we first found him. "I suppose you think we were after that two hundred, too. Well, you can take your little birthday present back. It was a lemon. We got stung."

"If you got what you deserved," I said, "you'd get more than stung."

He said, "Yes?"

"Yes," I said—"Y—e—s—yes! I never said you wanted the money. I know every one of you is square—Skinny too. Did I ever say you were not? I said you wanted the cross—that's what I said. And so you did. And I tell you now that you're going to get it and Skinny's going to bring it to you. Chuck him out if you want to—he should worry. If he isn't good enough for you, he's good enough—do you see that cabin up on the hill?

Do you see this fellow that's with me? He belongs to the Royal Bengal Tigers, if anybody should ask you, and Skinny's good enough for *him*. He can sleep up there—he should worry. They've got three extra cots.

"They'd better keep their watches near them," Vic Norris said. "Take him, you're welcome to him. Nobody ever said we were crooks in our patrol."

"Nobody said you were," I shouted, and Bert Winton just had to hold me back, "but you wouldn't talk like that if Mr. Ellsworth was here, and you know you wouldn't Do you suppose I'd let anybody say you weren't on the square? We're all in the one troop. But you boosted Skinny—you used him. And in a crazy fit he went out and blamed near gave his life for you. He doesn't know two of the laws. He can't say the oath straight, because you had his head filled with awards and medals and things. You wanted the gold cross and now, by Christopher, I'm going to see that you get it. You'll have nothing to say about it. Skinny McCord is going to bring you the gold cross just as you wanted, and you're going to shout and cheer till you can't speak."

"Who'll make us?" Connie said.

"I will," I told him.

CHAPTER XXVI

TELLS ABOUT GEOGRAPHY AND ALL THAT KIND OF STUFF

FIRST we tried to find Skinny to take him with us, but he wasn't anywhere around. Somebody told us they thought he was off somewhere with Uncle Jeb. I guess maybe Uncle Jeb didn't know anything about all the talk, because that was often the way it was with him. And even if he did know, maybe he took Skinny anyway. One thing sure, I hoped it was true, because whenever a fellow goes off with Uncle Jeb, he tells him all about the trees and things like that. Trees can be friends to you and they never go back on you, that's one thing.

I said, "He'll be all right as long as he's with Uncle Jeb."

Bert said, "Yes, but we'll have to get back before camp-fire. He'll be wandering around alone. I'll take him up to our cabin. Guess he'll be all right till we get back. Temple Camp can be a mighty lonely place sometimes, Blakeley."

Just the same, all the way over to the Hudson I kept thinking about Skinny and hoping he wasn't hiding away from the fellows or off all alone somewhere. I knew they wouldn't bother with him, especially now, and I kept thinking that may be he'd go away by himself and get into some harm. I kept thinking about how he said, "I want to be alone by myself," and he'd feel that way even more now, on account of the disgrace.

I said, "Poor little Skinny, I wish we had him along."

"He's with Uncle Jeb most likely," Bert said. "Wonder what the old man thinks about it? Ever look into those gray eyes of his?"

"You never catch Uncle Jeb saying anything till he's sure," I said, "and even then, it takes him a couple of minutes to get his pipe out of his mouth. He says when you aim always aim as if you had only one bullet and it was the last one in the world."

"That's him all right," Bert said.

"Well, there's no good worrying," I told him; "we'll just get back as soon as we can."

"What do you say we row across and cut through Nick's Valley?" Bert asked, "it's shorter."

"I'm game," I said, "the quicker the sooner."

"We can follow the old creek bed," he said. "Know where that is, don't you?"

I said, "Believe me, the only bed I know anything about is the one I sleep in. I don't see how you find out so many things, especially as you were never here before."

"Oh, I like to just prowl around," he said, "that's the way with tigers."

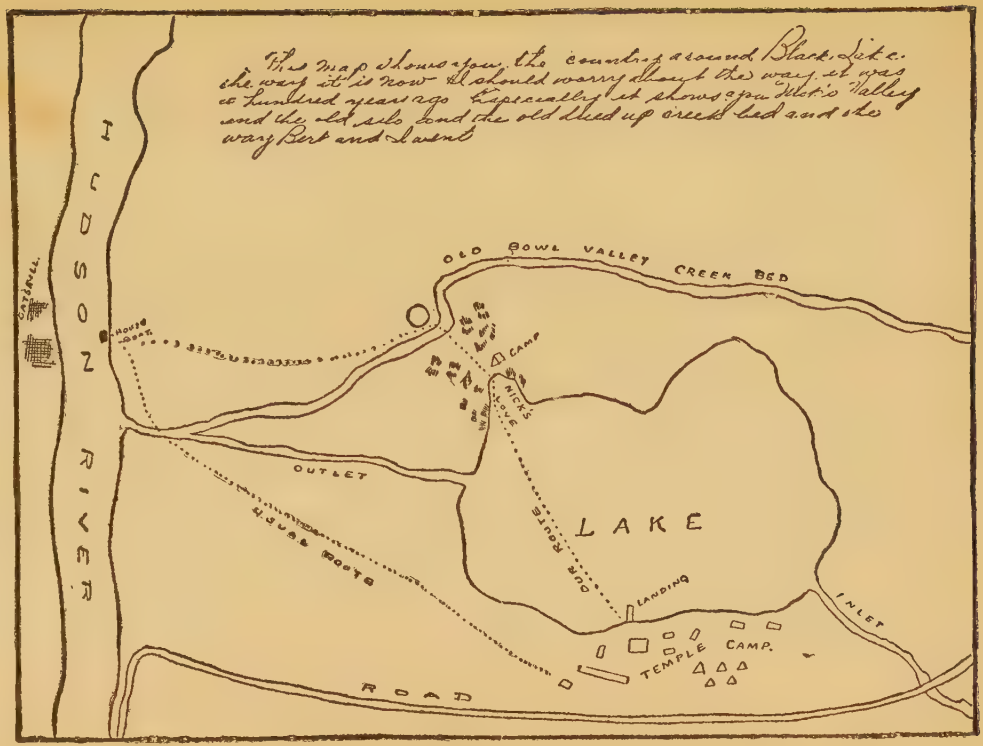
"I notice you always have a stick, too," I said.

He said, "Sure a stick's good company. I just root around with it."

"This is my third season here," I said, "and I never even heard about any old creek bed. I never heard about Nick's Valley either."

"Guess you never talked much with the old farmers, hey?" he asked.

We rowed across the lake to Nick's Cove (I knew all about that, because it was where the campers were and besides I knew about it anyway). If you will look on the map you'll see it and you'll notice how there are mountains there—kind of two sets of mountains with a space between. I made that map so you could see just how everything happened, because, believe me, we were


This map shows you the country around Black Lake the way it is now. I should worry about the way it was a hundred years ago. Especially it shows you Mott's Valley and the old silo and the old dried up creek bed and the way Bert and Lawrence
HUDSON RIVER
OLD BOWL VALLEY CREEK BED
CAMP
NICK'S LOOP
OUTLET
LAKE
OUR ROUTE
LANDING
INLET
TEMPLE CAMP.
ROAD

going to have *some* adventure. Only we didn't know it.

We rowed way up into the end of Nick's Cove and pulled the skiff part way up on shore. One thing I noticed and that was that some of the trees around there stood in the water. I knew that was on account of the lake being swollen, because there had been so much rain lately. Even over at Temple Camp the water was up to the spring-board, so that when we jumped on it, it splashed right into the lake.

"Cove is pretty big after all the rain," Bert said. And then, sure enough, he looked around and broke a branch off a tree and pulled the twigs off it. "That'll do to poke around with," he said, "now come ahead."

"You and your stick are like Uncle Jeb and his pipe," I told him.

He said, "Now we'll wend our way through old Nick's Valley. It'll bring us right out near the old creek bed. Then we can follow that right down to the river. That's the way Skinny did, but I guess he just stumbled through that way. Ever hear of old Nick?"

"Only on account of the name, Nick's Cove," I said; "is he dead?"

"Oh, very much dead," he said; "he died about a hundred years ago. Didn't you know he was dead?"

"Believe *me,* I never even knew he was sick," I told him.

Then he said, "Well, from all I can learn, old Nick owned all the land for miles around here, and he lived at the bottom of Black Lake."

"Good night," I said, "if I owned as much land as that, I wouldn't live at the bottom of a lake."

"Kind of damp, huh?" he asked; "but you see Black Lake wasn't here then."

"Where was it?" I asked him.

"Well it just wasn't," he said; "it was dry land. The way I make it out, it was Bowl Valley, and old Nick lived right down in the bottom of Bowl Valley. There's an old woman on the Berry Creek road who smokes a clay pipe. She's about a hundred years old. She told me all about it. People around here can't even tell you where Bowl Valley was. They don't know what you're talking about when you mention such a place. I dug up a whole lot of stuff about it. Old Nick's got descendants living around here now, and they don't even know about it."

"But you found out," I said.

"That's because I'm an old tramp," he said, laughing sort of; "I like to sit up on barnyard fences and chin with old wives—whenever I can manage to get away from my patrol."

"Gee, I don't blame them for not letting you get away from them," I said.

All the while we were hiking it along between the mountains and it was pretty wet in some places, because it was a low valley we were in.

"Now this is Nick's Valley," Bert said; "it's all full of puddles, hey? Look out for your feet. This will bring us out at the old creek bed and we can follow that down to the Hudson. Look at that fish, will you? A killie, huh? Washed away in here. Some rains!" He poked a little killie out from under some grass with his stick—honest, that fellow never missed anything. "Sometimes I root out the funniest kinds of insects you ever saw with a stick," he said; "it's a kind of a magic wand. Ever talk with a civil engineer?"

"Believe me," I said, "the only civil engineer I ever talked with, did most of the talking. He wouldn't let us play ball in his lot. He was an uncivil engineer, that's what *he* was."

Bert said, "Well, there was a civil engineer here with a troop from out west somewhere. He was

a scoutmaster. He took me on a couple of good hikes. We found some turtle shells over through there, a little farther along, and when he took a squint at the land he saw how a little valley, all grown up with weeds and brush, ran along east and west. He said that was where the creek once flowed and it didn't come within a mile of the lake. Savvy? The place where the lake is now used to be Bowl Valley. When the creek changed it's bed and cut through a couple of miles south, it just filled up Bowl Valley and there you are—Black Lake. Presto chango! Funny how old Dame Nature changes her mind now and then."

"That's just the way it is with girls," I said.

Bert said, "Well, and that scoutmaster said she'd be changing her mind again some day, too. He said the topography around here is pretty shaky—whatever that means."

"Oh, boy," I said, "break it to me gently. Do you mean that some fine day we'll wake up and find Black Lake has sneaked off?"

"That's just about it," he said.

"Do you call that fair and square?" I asked; "after Mr. Temple bought the lake and gave it to Temple Camp. Believe me, it *ought* to be called

Black Lake; it isn't very white, that's one sure thing."

"That may not happen for a thousand years," Bert said.

CHAPTER XXVII

TELLS ABOUT HOW WE TRIED TO STOP IT RAINING

JUMPING jiminy! That was a new one on *me*. Lakes moving around like people that live in flats —*good night!* And where would Temple Camp be, I'd like to know? And just after we paid four dollars and eighteen cents to put up a spring-board.

"If you wouldn't mind," I said, "I'd like to know how that could happen. Because if it's going away I'm going to stalk it."

"Do you know what erosion is?" he said.

"Not guilty," I told him.

"Well," he said, "it's earth being eaten away, kind of."

"By who?" I asked, "he must have some appetite."

"By the water," he said; "that's what causes changes in topography."

"All right," I said, "I'll take your word for it. But will the lake be there when we get back, because I've got some eel lines out?"

He said, "Oh, yes, it won't move till May first."

"Thank goodness for that," I told him.

I guess maybe you'd better look at the map now, hey? It isn't much of a map, but you should worry. If you don't take a good look at it, pretty soon you won't know where you're at. I guess you can squint out the valley between the mountains. That's Nick's Valley, everything around there belonged to old Nick. If he didn't own the moon, it was because he couldn't reach it.

Now, that's just where we went through, see? And it was all full of puddles—young lakes. I couldn't draw them with a pencil, but they were there. I can prove it, because I got my feet wet. Pretty soon Bert said, "Here's where you ought to have your scout staff with you," and just then I stumbled down among a lot of brush.

"Now you're in it," he said.

"In what?" I asked him.

"In the bed," he said.

"You call this a bed?" I asked him, "I like a brass bed better."

"If you'd only had your staff, you could have felt ahead."

"I can feel a head now," I told him, "and it's got a good bump on it."

"Well," he said, "you're right in the hollow where the old creek used to flow. Let's push along through it a little ways and see what we can dig up."

You couldn't see that it was a hollow just looking at it, but you had to go down into it and then you knew. It was all grown up with bushes and we just went along through it, the same as if we were pushing through a jungle. All of a sudden I felt something crunch under my foot, and when I picked it up, I saw it was a fish's backbone.

"See," Bert said, "what did I tell you?"

It seemed funny to be squirming our way along where a creek used to flow before it changed its mind and decided to flow into Bowl Valley. "Maybe it changed its mind and made the lake because it knew the scouts were coming, hey?" I asked. "That was a good turn."

"It was a good *long* turn," he said. "And nobody around here seems to know anything about this old creek bottom. We just stumbled into it the same as you did. That's some bump you've got."

"Sure, my topography is changed," I told him.

He said, "Old Nick fought in the Revolutionary War. He owned all this land around here right through to the lake—I mean Bowl Valley. His house was at the bottom of Bowl Valley."

"What do you say we fish it up some day?" I asked him.

"All this was his farm," Bert said. "See that old silo there? I guess that's what it was, or something like it."

"Maybe he hid muskets or powder from the redcoats there, hey?" I said.

Now if you'll look at the map, you'll see just where we were. I was right on the edge of that ring I made. Do you see the ring? Well, that ring was really a round hole in the ground just beside the old creek bottom. Gee, I wish you could have seen that hole. Because you can't make a hole on a map.

It was about fifty feet deep and about thirty feet wide, I guess, and it was all walled in with masonry. It looked like a great well. Bert thought it had something to do with the farm that used to be there, because quite near it, there was an old foundation. Maybe it was some kind of a silo, I don't know.

I said, "I'd like to get down in that."

"What for?" Bert said; "there's nothing but puddles at the bottom. How would you ever get out?"

"Couldn't we drop one of those saplings into it and I could shin up that?" I said. Because I saw two or three saplings lying around. I suppose they blew down in the storms lately.

"What would be the use?" he asked; "you can see what's down there. If we're going to get those letters onto a mail train, we've got to hustle."

That was enough for me, because I cared more about Skinny than I did about all the old creek bottoms and holes in the ground this side of Jericho. So I just said, "Righto," and we started following the old creek bed, till pretty soon the bushes were so thick that we hit up north of it a little ways and hiked straight over to the house-boat.

When we got to the house-boat we lowered the skiff and rowed across to Catskill and mailed the letters. Then we went up the street for a couple of sodas. Bert bought some peanut brittle, too—I'm crazy about that. Then we went to another store and got some post cards. Some of them had pictures of Temple Camp on them. I sent home about six. All the while it was getting dark and

pretty soon it began to rain, so I said, "Let's go and get a couple more sodas till it holds up." We drank two sodas each, but even still it didn't hold up.

"We can't make it hold up that way," Bert said; "I don't believe twenty sodas would do it, the way it's raining now."

"I guess you're right," I said, "but, anyway, I'm willing to try twenty, if you say so."

No fellow could ever say *I* was a quitter.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TELLS ABOUT HOW DAME NATURE CHANGED HER MIND

MAYBE you'll laugh at that stopping a shower with sodas. But once on my way home from school I stopped in Vander's Drug Store to get a soda, and wait for the rain to stop. When I was finished it hadn't stopped, so I got another soda—a strawberry. Even after that the rain didn't stop and I was just going to start out anyway, when a man who was in there said, "Why don't you try one more?" So I did—a pineapple—and by the tiime I had finished that, the rain had stopped. So that proves it.

But that day I'm telling you about, I guess it wouldn't have stopped even if we had stayed in Catskill a couple of hours drinking sodas. We sat on one of the benches in the waiting room of the wharf where the Albany boats stop, and watched it rain. It was so thick that we could hardly see across the river. Merry Christmas, didn't it come down! We saw the big day boat go

up and all her lights were burning, it was so dark on the river. I guess we waited a couple of hours.

"It's all on account of the old what's-his-name, St. Swithin," I said. "I bet he was the head of an umbrella trust."

Bert said, "Oh, I don't know, I kind of like rain. It's all part of the scout game." That was just like him, he had some use for everything.

I guess it must have been about supper time when it held up enough for us to start across. Anyway, I know I was hungry. But that was no proof it was supper time. Sometimes I've been hungry in the middle of the night. I guess St. Swithin stopped to have his supper; anyway, it began pouring again as soon as we got across.

"Anyway, we got the letters mailed," I said; "what do I care? Let it rain."

"I'm willing," Bert said, "as long as we can't stop it." We were both feeling good, even if we were wet.

"Suppose Lieutenant Donnelle writes and says he doesn't know anything about the money?" I said. Because now the excitement of getting the letters ready and all that was over, I began to feel a little shaky.

Bert said, "Well, if it's a case of *supposing*, suppose we start home."

We hiked it back the same way we had come, all the way in a pelting rain. It came down in sheets —and pillowcases. When we hit into the old creek bed, the water was running through it just the same as if it was a regular creek. It was right up to the top of the bushes that grew there and dragging them sideways, as it rushed along.

"Well, what do you know about that?" I said.

Bert just stood looking at it and then he said, "That's no rain water."

"Sure it is," I said; "what else do you suppose it is?"

"Something's wrong," he said.

All of a sudden he reached in through the wet bushes and pulled something out. "Look at that," he said.

It was a sort of a little college pennant on a stick.

"Those fellows went to Catskill didn't they?" Bert asked me, kind of quick.

I told him, "Yes, I thought so."

"Lucky for them," he said, "that's off their tent. Come on, hurry up."

We didn't try to go through the old creek bot-

tom, but even alongside it we began coming to big puddles, and pretty soon we were wading through water up to our waists. Even a hundred feet away from it, the land was like a lake and we just plodded and stumbled through water. I knew now that the rain itself could never have done that. Pretty soon we must have got over into the old creek bed, because we stumbled and went kerflop in, and the next thing we knew, we were swimming.

"Let's get out of this, but try to keep near it," Bert said, "so we'll know where we're going. This has got me rattled. I don't know what's happened or where we're at. I don't even know if we're north or south of the creek bed."

It was pretty hard keeping near the hollow, because all the land was flooded and we had to feel each step. But if we got away from it, *good night,* we didn't know where we might end. Only the trouble was, it kept getting worse and worse the farther we went, and it nearly toppled us over backwards, it was flowing so strong.

Pretty soon Bert stopped and said, "Listen."

We were both standing in the water up to our waists, and I was shivering, it was so cold.

"Do you hear the sound of water rushing?" he asked me.

I listened and heard a sound far off like a waterfall.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Search *me*," Bert answered, "but we're in bad here. Let's head for the mountains."

Now I didn't know what had happened, except that the whole country was under water. When it comes to the lay of the land I can usually tell where I'm at, but when it comes to the lay of the water, *good night*. And believe me, there's nothing that changes the looks of things like water.

"I think those are the mountains that make Nick's Valley," I said; "let's try to get over that way."

"There's a waterfall coming down out of a crevice between them," Bert said; "I know what's happened, the valley is flooded."

You see we were in the low fields west of those mountains. I can't tell you just where, but somewhere. There were hollows in the fields so sometimes we were walking and sometimes we were swimming. It was the outside of the mountains that we saw, as you might say; I mean the side away from the valley, so the water coming out through a cleft proved that the water must be pretty high inside—I mean in Nick's Valley. I

guess you'll see what I mean if you'll look at the map.

But, believe me, it wasn't easy to get to those mountains. Seeing them was one thing and getting to them was another. We just plodded around, stumbling off little hills that were under water and we didn't seem to get anywhere. After a while we came out on higher land where there wasn't much water except puddles.

"Some cruise, hey?" I said.

"Shh, listen!" Bert said. "You can hear it plainer now. Look over there."

Now as near as I can tell you we must have been standing near the north side of the old creek bottom and we must have been pretty close to the old silo, or whatever you call it, but we didn't know that then. Believe *me,* we didn't know anything, except that we were wet. We were standing on a little sort of a hill and the water was washing up almost to our feet. Besides it was getting dark.

But anyway, this is what we saw, and if you just make believe that you're standing on a little hill near that old pit and looking south toward Black Lake, you'll see just what we saw—as you might say. We saw the water just pouring through Nick's Valley and coming toward us and

going pell-mell into the old creek bed. Now that's the best way I can tell it to you. I guess the little hill we were on acted kind of like a back stop maybe (anyway, that's what Bert said) because the water only beat against it and then went tumbling back into the creek bed and down toward the Hudson. It was down that way that it overflowed mostly and flooded the fields we had been plodding through.

"One thing, we had a grandstand view," I said.

And believe me, that was true. The water just came pouring and rushing between those mountains, and sometimes we could see trees, and things we thought might be parts of houses coming along. One big white thing we saw, and we knew it was a tent. Black Lake was coming out to meet us through Nick's Valley.

CHAPTER XXIX

TELLS ABOUT HOW WE LOOKED INTO THE PIT

I NEVER saw anything like that before and it—it didn't exactly scare me—but it made me feel sort of funny. It gave me the creeps to see right in front of me like that, how lakes and valleys and all the land could be changed and me standing there watching it. It seemed as if the earth was being made all over again, as you might say.

"That's where we came through only a little while ago," I said, "how will it be inside where the lake was— is?"

Especially it seemed queer like, because it was getting dark fast and the sound of the water rushing and the sky all black made everything seem awful gloomy.

"Is Temple Camp all right, do you suppose?" I asked Bert.

"Guess so," he said, "that's over on the south shore. "But hanged if I know how we're going to get there or anywhere else. Guess we'll just have to stand here like the Statue of Liberty."

I said, "Listen to the water."

"It isn't so high in the valley," Bert said; "it must have been worse a couple of hours ago." Then all of a sudden he said.

"Shh—listen!"

"I hear it," I said.

"No, not the water," he said; "listen. Do you hear a sound like groaning?"

I listened, and as sure as I was standing there, I heard a low sound, as if someone was groaning far away.

"That isn't the water, is it?" Bert asked.

"Sure it isn't," I told him, "and it isn't from up through Nick's Valley, because, look, the wind is blowing from us that way."

I held up my scout scarf to show him how it blew toward the valley. And again we heard the groans, long and low, sort of.

"It's somewhere right around here," Bert said; then all of a sudden he said, "Look!"

Just in back of us, not more than twenty or thirty feet off, was the pit. I could see it plain, because the stone work came up a couple of feet or so above the ground. Right close to it was a canoe all smashed in. I could see now that a couple of hours or so earlier, the water must have poured through there when it first overflowed the creek.

We listened again and could hear the groaning plain.

"I don't know who it is," Bert said, "but that's the Gold Dust Twins' canoe. Come on."

We plodded over through the mud and water to the pit and looked over the edge. It was pretty dark down there, but I could see that there was only a little water in the bottom of it—not much more than before.

"That's funny," Bert said; "it must have overflowed in there when it first splashed down into the creek bed."

He felt in his pocket and took out a flashlight and held it down the hole, but it was wet and wouldn't light.

"Look down at the bottom, over at the left side," he said; "do you see something?"

At first it looked like a bundle all covered with mud. Then I saw something white on it. It was a face. It didn't budge, just lay there; and it seemed awful white on account of the bottom being almost dark.

"It's Skinny," Bert said, in a kind of whisper.

I just said, "Yes."

I couldn't say anything more, because I was all trembling.

CHAPTER XXX

TELLS ABOUT HOW TIGERS LEAP

Of course, we didn't stop to think about it then, but I knew that when the water first came rushing through Nick's Valley, it must have been dashed right into the pit. There was Skinny's body to prove it. Afterward, when it got flowing into the creek bottom and spreading out over the fields below, I could see how it wouldn't flow into that hole. But you can see for yourself, if you look at the map, that in the first rush it *must* have done that. Gee, I'm no civil engineer, but anyway, I could see that. Anyway, we didn't stop to think about that, or the canoe either, but only just Skinny.

"See if the paddle's anywhere around," Bert said. His voice was awful funny—sharp kind of, as if he meant business.

"What do you want that for?" I asked him, all excited.

"Look and see—do as I tell you," he just said.

It was in the smashed canoe and I just stood there holding it.

"What'll I do with it?" I asked him.

"Just hold it," he said. Then he said, "Now, Blakeley, there's only one way to get down there and that's to jump. It's pretty deep, but the main question is, 'is it wide enough?' If it is—well, I'm a tiger and I ought to manage it."

I didn't know then, but I found out afterward that when a tiger makes a leap out of a tree he rolls over when he hits ground and turns a sort of summersault, so as to break the shock. There's a certain way to do it, that's all I know. But I knew when he said it, that the Royal Bengal Tigers from Ohio were like the others away out in India, in more ways than I ever thought about.

I said, "Bert, you can't do it—tigers are—

"Shut up," he said, "and listen—"

"Even if you did," I said—"No, I *won't* shut up —*you* listen. Even if you did, how could you get out? Have some sense. I've followed you all the time, but now you've got to listen. I like you better than any fellow—even Westy—and—*please* wait a minute—even Skinny. It's too late—Bert."

He said, "Blakeley, we have two chances—just two. You know the third law. I don't tell you what you've got to do, Blakeley. That's your business—but listen." He put his hand on my

shoulder and his voice was all husky. He said, "Blakeley, if I don't make it, you'll have my body to ease the shock for you. People—people will be here to-morrow—you'll get out. It's getting *in* we have to think about. If I don't make it, try to land on your feet—a little forward—like this—see? And duck your head and do a summersault forward—see? If you don't want to, it's none of my business. Only I'm telling you how. Here," he said, and he threw a lot of things out of his pockets; "you give them to my patrol."

"Keep them, I said, "I'll get them when I come down, if that's necessary. It's—it's you and I and Skinny, Bert—sink or swim—live or die—it's the three of us. I'm ready."

CHAPTER XXXI

TELLS ABOUT THE OLD PASSAGEWAY

HONEST, as sure as I'm sitting here, I would have gone down first—after the way that fellow spoke to me. It just sent thrills through me. And only a couple of days before, I didn't like him and I thought he didn't trust Skinny.

I grabbed hold of him and I said, "Bert, I—just a second—*please*—I have to tell you—if I don't see you again—I mean so I can speak to you—I have to tell you, you're a hero—"

But he jerked my hand off his sleeve. He didn't say anything, but just jerked my hand off his sleeve. And I stood there holding the paddle, and I could hear the water rushing in the valley, and I was breathing hard and all trembling.

I called, "Bert! Are you all right, Bert?"

But he didn't answer. Then I went to the edge and I was all shaking from head to foot. But I was ready. It was all dark down there and I couldn't see. Anyway, I was ready.

"Bert!" I called, and I just waited. I could hear the water rushing through the valley and sometimes sounds like trees breaking. And I heard a tree-toad moaning—it seemed funny to hear that.

"Bert!". I called. I felt cold, and my wrists were all tingling. "Bert!"

Then I stuck the paddle in the mud and hung my hat on the end of it. Just then I heard a voice. It sounded strained and not like Bert's, as if it couldn't speak on account of pain.

"Don't—jump—stay—"

I waited a few seconds and then called, "If *you're* hurt, I'm coming anyway."

"Don't—jump," he kind of groaned; "I'm all right. Just a strain. Don't jump."

I sat on the edge waiting. I was just counting the seconds. I was afraid he'd never speak again.

Then he said, "All right, kiddo—just strained my wrist."

"Are you *sure?*" I called down; "dip it in the water; slap some mud on it. Is he dead?"

I knew now that he must be all right, because I heard him move. For about half a minute he didn't answer. Then he called up:

"He's alive, but he isn't conscious."

"How about *you?*" I said.

"Alive and conscious," he said; "don't worry."

Then for about a minute he didn't speak.

"Do you want the paddle?" I called.

"Nope—chuck it," he said. "This is a place of mystery. Know where the water went? There's a passageway down here; it's big enough to crawl through. Ouch!"

"Tell me the truth," I said, "you're hurt."

"I'm in a very critical condition from a swollen wrist," he said; "shut up, will you! There's a secret passageway or something or other down here. Where do you suppose it goes?"

"Hanged if *I* know," I said; "what about Skinny?"

"He's breathing, that's all *I* know," he said.

For a couple of minutes I sat on the edge thinking and I could hear him down there. I didn't know what he was doing.

Then I called, "You know Rebel's Cave, don't you? Above the shore south of Nick's Cove—near the outlet? Maybe it comes out there—the passage, I mean."

"What makes you think so?" he called.

"I don't say I think so," I said; "only there's a

kind of a passageway that goes into the hills there. It starts in the cave. None of us ever followed it, because it's so dark and wet. A fellow found an old musket stock there once."

"What do you say?" he called; "there's no time to lose, that's sure. Shall I try it? It would take an hour to flood this pesky old hole, even if I could stop up the passage."

Then all of a sudden I knew why he had told me to be ready with the paddle. It was so I could open a little trench through the muddy land and start the water flowing into the pit. That way he'd get to the top with Skinny.

"But you can't stop up the passageway," I said. "The water flowed through it and went out somewhere—maybe through the cave and back into the lake. If it's big enough you could do the same. Both of us—

"Stay where you are," he shouted, "and don't be a fool. Do you suppose I want to carry two fellows through there? One's enough. By heck, I'm going to try it—it's the only thing to do."

"Suppose it shouldn't bring you out anywhere?" I said.

"Suppose it should," he fired back at me.

Then he said, "Now, Blakeley, I'll tell you what

to do. I'm going to start through this place with the kid—he's alive, that's the most I can tell you. It must come out somewhere and I'll bank on its coming out where you say. If it doesn't and—"

"Don't talk like that, Bert," I said; "it's *got* to, if *you* want it to. What is it you want me to do?"

He said, "I want you to beat it up through the mountains that close in Nick's Valley. That way you'll get to the lake. Don't expect to see Nick's Cove, because it's off the map. When you get to the lake, find somebody. Get over to camp if you can—I don't care how. Maybe the boat we left in the cove is cast up there—you can't tell. Anyway, keep your head and don't get excited. The lake is there. It'll be lower than it was, but all the water below the valley level will be there. Get some people and take them to Rebels' Cave or whatever you call it and just wait."

"Is that all I shall do?" I asked him.

"What else can you do? Just wait there; or two or three of you might come in with lanterns to meet me."

"Suppose you're not there?" I said, all trembling.

"Well, if I'm not there, you'll know I'm with Skinny anyway, and if anybody ever digs up our

bones, they won't know who's who. Hurry up now. Beat it. And remember you're a scout."

"But suppose—"

"You leave that to me," he said.

CHAPTER XXXII

TELLS ABOUT WHAT I DISCOVERED IN REBELS' CAVE

"ALL righto, so long," I heard him say.

After a few seconds I called, "Are you all right?"

And I heard him say, as if his voice was muffled and far away, "All right, so far."

I said to myself, "Poor little kid, he isn't very heavy, that's one thing." Then I started off.

It wasn't hard to swim across the old creek bed, because the water was flowing easier now, and pretty soon I was hiking it up through the mountains. Now, the way I went was through those mountains west of Nick's Valley. And I went south toward the lake. You look at the map and you'll see just the way I went.

The woods are pretty thick up in those mountains and a couple of times I got rattled about which way to go. But most of the time I could look down and see the valley and the water in the bottom of it, just like a river. It wasn't rushing

any more and I guessed that whatever happened, the worst of it was over.

Pretty soon I came out where I could look down and see the lake all spread out before me. It was there all right. But first I didn't get the hang of things, because Nick's Cove wasn't there at all. There was just a kind of a river flowing from where Nick's Cove used to be, right through the valley. There were lots of trees, all uprooted, down there, too, and the place was so different that I couldn't even tell where the Gold Dust Twins' tent had been. Anyhow, it wasn't there any more, that was sure. All around the lake was a kind of gray border and I guess it showed how much the water had gone down. But, gee, there was enough lake left to satisfy anybody. A scout that wouldn't be satisfied with what was left must be a hog. But, oh, boy, when that flood started, it must have piled up in Nick's Valley. Anyway, I could see Temple Camp all safe across the water, but the spring-board was way up in the air—gee, it looked awful funny.

There were half a dozen or so of the Temple Camp boats with fellows in them, flopping around near the old cove. It was almost dark, but I could see them plain. I guess they had rowed

across just to look around and see how things looked there. A couple of hours before they would have been carried right through on the flood, but when I looked down it was pretty calm there.

I shouted to them and started down the mountainside for the shore. I could see Westy and Pee-wee and a couple of Portland scouts in one of the boats. All the while I was coming down I kept shouting and when I got to the shore, there were half a dozen boats to meet me. Mr. Elting and Uncle Jeb were in one of them. Besides, I could see half a dozen fellows plodding around on shore. I knew they were looking for Gold Dust Camp.

"Don't bother hunting for those fellows," I shouted, all out of breath; "they're all right; they're down at Catskill or somewhere. Bert Winton started through the passageway from an old pit—he's got Skinny—take me in and row down to Rebels' Cave. Anybody got a lantern?"

I guess they thought I was crazy, appearing from up in the mountains like that and shouting about pits and passageways and Rebels' Cave. But as soon as Mr. Elting and Uncle Jeb took me into their boat, I told them about all that happened.

Uncle Jeb just looked at Mr. Elting and Mr. Elting looked awful serious. Then Uncle Jeb

shook his head and said, "It daon't come out through Rebels' Cave, I reckon. I ain't never *ex*plored Rebel's Cave, but it daon't come out thar, nohow."

I was just trembling all over when I heard him say that.

"It was the only way he could do, anyway," I said. "It must come out somewhere."

Mr. Elting said, "We're not blaming you, my boy, nor Winton, either." Then he said, kind of serious, "Let me go ashore, Uncle Jeb. Some of you row over to the cave. Here, some of you boys, come along with me. Who wants to volunteer to go back through the mountains? George," he said (he's in a Boston troop, that fellow George), "you row across and get some lanterns —quick. You go with him, Harry; get your fists on those oars—hurry up. Bring some rope and an aid kit. You stay with Uncle Jeb, Roy."

Gee, I can hardly tell you how things happened. The next second fellows were hurrying back and forth, getting in and out of boats, while the one boat skimmed across to the camp landing.

In a half a minute Mr. Elting and about a dozen scouts were standing on the cove shore, waiting for the boat to come back, and meanwhile we

rowed down along the south shore to where the cave is. It's about half way down to the outlet. You can see about where it is. Several other boats went down there with us. Westy was in one of them and I made him come in our boat, because now that Bert was gone, maybe dead, and Skinny, too, I just felt as if I'd like to have one of my patrol near me—I just felt that way. Besides, Westy was my special chum and after all I liked him best of any. When you're feeling kind of shaky, that's the time you like to have one of your own patrol with you—you bet.

Soon we heard the boat coming back and could see the lanterns bobbing. "Pull hard," I heard Mr. Elting call from the shore. It sounded awful clear in the night. The fellows in the boat rowed straight for us and gave us an aid kit and a couple of lanterns.

"That you, Blakeley?" I heard a fellow say. It was young Mr. Winter; he's Mr. Temple's secretary, and he always spends his vacations at Temple Camp. "Who's there?" he asked.

"Uncle Jeb and Westy and I," I said; "I don't know who's in the other boats; everybody, I guess."

They didn't stop but a second and they pulled

for where Mr. Elting and the fellows were waiting. I could hear their voices and see the lanterns rocking, as they hiked up the side of the mountains.

"Maybe I ought to have gone with them," I said.

"They'll find the place, I reckon," Uncle Jeb said. "Naow let's pull ashore and root around."

The fellows in the other boats waited, just rowing around close to shore, while Uncle Jeb and Westy and I climbed up to the cave. It was higher above the lake than it was before, on account of the water escaping and we had to scramble up through a lot of mud.

I was so excited I couldn't keep still and I just stumbled into the cave and stood there for a couple of seconds, holding the lantern. It was as dark as pitch and smelled like earth. I kind of had a feeling that it was a grave. I was sorry I had ever shouted down to Bert Winton that maybe the passageway came out there. Anyway, I held the lantern into the passage way. It was a sort of an opening between two big rocks inside. Then I squeezed myself in and went ahead about thirty or forty feet, I guess. And that was every bit as far as I could go. The passageway just fizzled out

against a great big rock. It didn't lead anywhere at all.

Then, all of a sudden, a cold feeling came over me and my fingers just loosened and I dropped the lantern. It sort of scared me when I heard the glass crash on the ground. For about half a minute I couldn't budge; I just couldn't go out and tell Westy and Uncle Jeb that it was all up with Bert Winton—I just couldn't do it. Because I knew I was to blame for shouting that down to him like a fool.

If I had been a good scout I would have *known* that passage didn't lead anywhere. Look how Bert was always finding things out and how he knew all about the country around there. I could just kind of see him poking around with his stick. And I just couldn't call and I felt sick, as if I was going to fall right down.

"It was me that killed him," I cried, and I heard a voice say, *"killed him."*

It was just an echo, I guess.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TELLS ABOUT HOW WESTY AND I WAITED

Uncle Jeb and Westy came in and saw how it was and there wasn't anything more to do, so we went back to the boat. The fellows who were waiting around in the other boats said it wasn't my fault, but anyway, I knew it was.

Uncle Jeb said, "Wall, naow, you take it kinder hard, Roay. Remember thars two strings ter this here bow, as the feller says. We got another party uv good scouts ter hear frum yet. You jest come over ter camp 'n get a cup uv hot coffee."

I said I didn't want any hot coffee and that I was just going to wait around with Westy. I just wanted to be with Westy. So Uncle Jeb went back in one of the other boats and Westy and I just rowed around together. At the spot where the others had started up the mountain, a couple of boats were pulled up so that the fellows could cross when they got back. It was pitch dark up the mountainside and I looked up to see if I could see any lights that might be their lanterns.

"They can't get back for an hour yet," Westy said; "don't let's get too close to the new outlet. It may be running pretty strong, even yet."

I said, "I don't care a lot what happens to me now."

"Well, *I* do," Westy said.

"I know I haven't seen much of you in the last couple of days," I told him; "but I don't want you to think it's because I don't care any more. It was mostly because I was trying to help Skinny. Anyway, it's all over now. How did the fellows treat him to-day? If they'd known it was his last day, they'd have treated him decent, I bet."

"I didn't see him," Westy said; "I was hunting for you most all the afternoon."

"I'm going to stick by you closer after this," I said. "It was only because Bert Winton was, sort of—you know—"

"I know," Westy said, "everybody fell for him. I'm not blaming you."

"But anyway, I'm glad I've got you now," I told him; "we were always good friends, that's one sure thing. I'd feel mighty lonesome if I didn't have you."

"I never got jealous," Westy said; "I always

knew how it was with us. I just went stalking with the Ravens—it was so kind of slow."

"It won't be that way any more," I told him; and I just almost had to gulp—gee, I don't know why. "Only a couple of nights ago I was flopping around like this with Bert Winton and now he's gone—he was a hero, that's sure—and you and I are together again."

"We heard you while we were at camp-fire," Westy said.

"Did you mind?" I asked.

"No, I didn't mind," he said.

"It's funny how two fellows get to be chums," I said.

Westy didn't say anything, only just rowed around. After a while he said, "He knew how to feather, that fellow did. I guess his troop will go home now, hey?"

"Maybe he turned and went back through the passage and they'll find him all safe in the pit," Westy said.

"Nope," I told him; "the lake's different—everything is changed. Skinny won the cross and he's dead. And Bert is dead. It doesn't make any difference what the camp thinks about Skinny now, because he won't know it. And even if

they're sore still, Bert won't know it. They won't be back. Everything is changed."

"You just said you and I are not changed," Westy said.

Then we just rowed around and neither one of us said anything. It was awful dark and still.

"How do you suppose Skinny happened to get there?" I asked Westy.

"The flood carried him through," he said.

"But how did he happen to be in the cove? It couldn't have carried him through if he hadn't been in the cove," I said.

"Guess we'll never know that," I told him.

Then we rowed around some more and neither of us said anything.

"Look up there and see if you think that's a lantern," Westy said, after a while.

"Yes, it is," I said, "they're coming back." And then my heart began to thump.

"I bet they've got them and that everything's all right," Westy said; "I kind of think so by the way the lantern is swinging."

Pretty soon we saw another light and then another one; and then I could hear some of the fellows talking and hear twigs crunch under their

feet as they scrambled down. I didn't dare to call them, but Westy called.

"Any news? Are they all right?"

"Who's there?" a fellow called.

"Two fellows from Bridgeboro troop," Westy shouted. "Have you got them? Any news?"

Just then a fellow came scrambling down and stood on the shore. "The whole blamed pit has fallen in," he said; "it's just a pile of rocks and mud. It's filled up to within six or eight feet of the surface. Just collapsed. Must have been some flood over that way."

CHAPTER XXXIV

TELLS ABOUT THE STRANGE FIGURE

I DIDN'T want to see them and I didn't want to hear anything more. I just said, "I knew it," to Westy, but all the while I knew I had been hoping all to myself. And now I couldn't even do that.

"I don't want to talk to them," I said; "Let's row along the north shore and go home the long way. I don't want to go back yet. I just want to stay on the lake with *you.*"

Westy said, "Just as you say."

"Row along the north shore," I said, "I'd rather be here in the dark."

"Just as you say," he said, awful nice and friendly like.

We could hear them rowing across and talking. The lanterns looked like two little stars. One fellow said it would take a week to clear out the pit. I heard Mr. Elting say, "It must have happened as soon as he crawled into that passage, because the passage surely didn't go far."

"Now are you satisfied?" I said to Westy; "you see how I'm to blame. I though it could be a mile long."

"Winton thought so too," Westy said.

"I wouldn't listen to anything against him—not now," I said. Anyway, I knew he couldn't be saved —I just did. Then I said, "Westy, Bert and I were going to square Skinny. We were going to prove he didn't take the money. And we were going to see he got the cross. I never heard you say what you thought. All I know is what everyone in camp thinks. But listen. If a fellow is willing to give up his life, as Bert did, trying to prove a fellow innocent—if he's just willing to give up doing everything else—he sat on the top of his troop cabin—he did—and said to me—"

"Don talk," Westy said; "just sit still and let me row you around. Hear that night hawk?"

"Then doesn't that prove that he's innocent?" I asked him. "Any fellow with any sense can see that. You needn't tell me what you think—but the —the gold cross isn't dead—it isn't—and a fellow can—he can win it after he's dead—and those Elks—"

"Listen," Westy said; "there's somebody on shore."

"What do I care?" I said.

He said, "I know, but maybe it's the Gold Dust Twins. If they came home through the open country, they'd be sure to hit the lake at the wrong spot. Maybe they're looking for their camp. Let's get closer in, anyway."

I didn't care much what he did. If it hadn't been for the Gold Dust Twins there would never have been any trouble, I knew that.

"I don't care where you go," I said.

"A good turn is a good turn," Westy said. "Maybe everything has changed, but good turns haven't changed. Their own tent is gone, their canoe is smashed—you said so yourself—and they're on the opposite side from Temple Camp. You know our signboard over there, *"Welcome to friend or stranger."*"

"Come on in and get them," I said, "I don't care. I don't care about anything. Why did he ever try to paddle across in all that rain? That was the beginning of all the trouble. A couple of bungling tenderfeet—"

As we rowed in and skirted the shore, I could see a dark figure following along at the edge.

"Who are you? What are you doing there?" Westy asked.

"Want to get across," the person said and his voice sounded kind of husky.

"What for?" Westy asked him.

I guess he didn't answer; anyway, I didn't hear him, because I wasn't paying much attention. Westy rowed in and the fellow stepped out on a rock in the water and waited.

I saw he had a stick in his hand.

CHAPTER XXXV

TELLS ABOUT A NEW CAMP

"THAT you, kiddo?" he called.

"Bert!" I said.

"Give us a lift over, will you?"

I just said, "What—is it you—Bert? Say yes. Say it's you."

"Well, then, it's me," he said; "hold her steady, my leg is stiff. All right, shall I push off?"

He stood there in the boat and he was lame and his left hand was hanging in his scout scarf that was made into a sling. In the lantern light I could see the yellow and black stripes. And he pushed against the stone with the stick that he had in his free hand, and started the boat off.

All I could say was just "Bert!" And I held the lantern close to him as he sat down. There was a long cut on his face and he didn't have any hat or jacket on and his trousers were all torn and dirty.

"Where—did—you—where is Skinny?" I asked him.

"Ever see a tiger use a crutch before?" he said. "I'm a punk tiger—what d'ye say."

"Royal—Royal Bengal," Westy said.

"The kid is down near the Hudson shore," Bert said, in that easy way he had; "he's at Camp McCord. He's come up in the world since you saw him."

"Bert," I said tell me—tell us—quick."

"Not much to tell," he said, "except Skinny and I are both on the job. We're in the hands of the Gold Dust Twins."

"The which?" I blurted out.

"That's them," he said, "and if you ever want to guy those fellows you'd better not do it when I'm around. They're fourteen karat gold dust, that's what. Skinny walked around to their camp this morning, to ask them not to believe that he took the money."

"Poor little codger," Westy said.

"Oh, he isn't so poor," Bert said. "He's in soft with that pair. He went around and asked them *please* not to believe it—*please*. Do you get that? *Please*. He asked them not to take the money if anyone gave it to them, because it *really wasn't theirs*. That's him. They kept him to lunch and told him they believed him and that nobody could cram any money down their throats

with a ramrod. Hey? What do you think of that?"

"They may be green campers, but they're the whitest green campers I ever heard of," I said.

"You said it," Bert shouted. "They told Skinny to stay right there with them and never mind about the fellows over at camp. They told him he could have the tent and the flag and the canoe instead of the cross, and to just stay and make himself at home. When they started for the races down below Catskill, they left him sitting in the canoe—happy—with a capital H.

After that you know what happened. Skinny and the canoe and the whole shebang went pell-mell through the valley. Lucky the twins weren't there. When I got to Catskill with Skinny, who should we meet but the twins and I told them everything that happened—how you and I rescued Skinny and all that."

I said, "How on earth did you get to Catskill with him?"

"Well, what do you think those twins did? You have three guesses. They bought a tent in Catskill and a lot of canned stuff. One of them telegraphed his father for more stuff—and money, I guess. And we're camping out in a nice little

grove right near the Hudson. Good fishing and a row across whenever you want an ice cream soda. Ought to appeal to *you*, hey? You notice I say we? That's us. Camp McCord is the name of the place and—"

"But how about rescuing Skinny?" I asked him; "how did you get him to Catskill? How about—"

"Shut up!" he said. "Camp McCord is the name of the place and there Skinny's going to stay till the Elk Patrol of the Bridgeboro Troop marches down in a body and hands him the gold cross. Those are the Gold Dust Twins' orders."

"But Bert," I said, "that isn't the way they present the cross. You have to have a special meeting and the scoutmaster—"

"Scoutmaster be hanged," he said; "the Elk Patrol is going to march down to Camp McCord and hand the gold cross to Skinny. We're just waiting for a letter. Scout Bennett is going to do the handing. We haven't made up our minds yet whether we'll have him kneel down or not."

CHAPTER XXXVI

TELLS ABOUT WHAT BERT TOLD ME

He seemed different from the way he was before. He was all excited when he talked, and I could see he was just crazy about those new plans.

I said, "But tell us how you rescued Skinny."

"Don't bother your head about trifles," he said. "The passage came out in the old creek bed in the high land east of the flood; I'll tell you about it later. Listen, do you know what those fellows were doing? They may be rotten scouts, Blakeley, but they're A-1 sports. They're having a pennant made in Catskill. They're going to fly it over the tent. It says Camp McCord."

"I don't see how you did all this so soon," I told him; "I wish you'd tell me about the rescue."

"Row quicker," he said, "I've got to see my patrol and get some duds and beat it back by the road. They'll understand. It'll only be a few days."

"Bert," I said, "I'm going with you; Westy and I are—"

He said, "Now don't begin that. We've had one flood already; isn't that enough? Do you want everybody leaving camp? The trustees won't stand for that. I can speak to my scoutmaster, but *you* can't because yours is away. Now don't spoil everything, *please*. Come down and see us to-morrow, both of you, and we'll give you a couple of home-made doughnuts."

"Will the twins make them?"

"Never you mind. Come down to-morrow and give us the once over. Just follow the shore up from Pike's Landing; you'll see a khaki colored tent in among the trees. That's us. They're putting up the tent now."

"Have you got drainage?" Westy asked him, kind of funny.

"They're digging a regular Panama Canal around that tent," he said.

"Bert," I told him, "you know the rule—"

"Now don't begin about rules. Listen. Your scoutmaster is away. About every fellow in Temple Camp thinks Skinny is just a miserable little thief. He went over to see those fellows because—well, you know why. They took him in. And, by jinks, he's going to stay there and so am I—till this thing is fixed up.

I WENT INTO THAT PASSAGEWAY WITH THAT KID ON MY BACK.
Roy Blakeley's Adventures in Camp. *Page* 213

"Blakeley and Westy," he said, and I could see he was pretty serious now; "I went into that passageway with that kid on my back. I was ready to crawl a mile and drag him along if I had to. As it turned out, the passage was about a couple of hundred feet long and came out in the old creek bed, like I said—up above the flood area. Blakeley, when I saw the light of day—or the light of night rather, because anything was lighter than that black hole—and when I laid that skinny little kid down—he doesn't weigh fifty pounds, Blakeley—I just said to myself, *'By the great Eternal, I'm going to stick to him like glue!'* That's what I said. Even then I didn't know he had been over to plead with those fellows and ask them *please* not to believe he was a thief. When I heard that—"

"I know, Bert," I told him, "you're right."

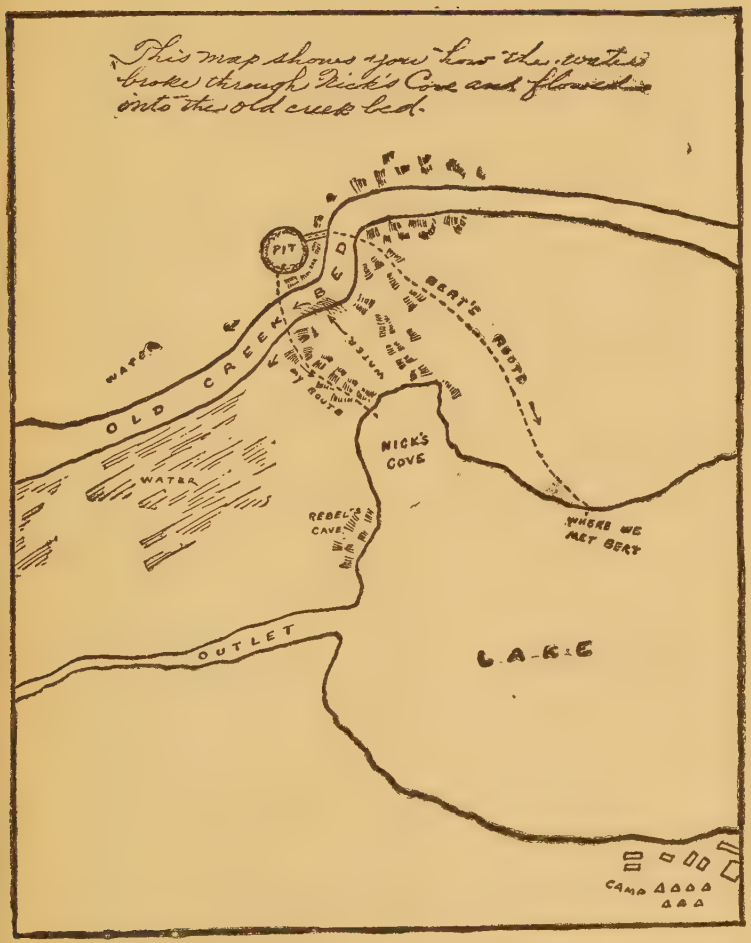
"I'm not thinking about myself," he said; "my troop understands me; and they understand Skinny. He could bunk with us, or with you fellows. But this is better."

"I hope nobody'll raise a kick," Westy said.

Bert said, "A kick? We're the ones to raise a kick. Haven't I got anything to say about it? I *couldn't* bring the kid here—I'm not a horse. So

I did the next best thing; I carried him down the old creek bed a ways, to where the water flowed into it. It was flowing easy then. I laced a couple of broken off branches together and made the craziest raft *you* ever saw. Then I laid the kid on it and held his head and poled with the other hand and that way we got down to the Hudson. I intended to get him to some house down there and then notify camp. He was a little better by then and a fellow stayed with him near the shore, while I rowed over to Catskill for some iodine and stuff. Would you believe it? I ran plunk into the Gold Dust Twins in the drug store; they were drinking sodas. They've got you beaten seven ways at that game. Well, I told them all about the flood and how I found Skinny and how their camp was carried away, and they didn't seem to take it hard at all, they just laughed and said it was part of the game.

"Oh, Blakeley," he said, "then was when the fun started—telegrams! One of them had to buy out a peanut stand for Skinny—and then for a tent. We rooted out that old sail maker from bed, and made him sell us a tent. They gave him an order for a flag—*CAMP McCORD*—mind you. Laugh! I just followed them around. They'r


This map shows you how the water broke through Nick's Cove and flowed into the old creek bed.
PIT
OLD CREEK BED
WATER
OLD CREEK
WATER
NICK'S COVE
BERT'S ROUTE
REBEL'S CAVE
WHERE WE MET BERT
OUTLET
LAKE
CAMP

two of the gamest sports you ever saw. We went back to the landing in a taxi with cans of food rolling all over the floor. *'Go faster,'* one of them shouted to the taxi man, 'or I'll fire a can of pickled beets at your head.' We hired a motor-boat to take us over and then they retired from the game. Some whirligig, take it from me!

"But they wouldn't pick out the place for a camp," Bert said; "they made me do that. 'We don't want to be drowned out again,' they said. Honest, Westy, those two fellows are down there now, digging a drain ditch and carrying it way over to the Hudson. *'Safety First'*—that's what they said. And Skinny's sitting there with a bandage around his head, eating peanuts."

As soon as Bert got out of the boat, he started right off up the hill for Tigers' Den, as they called it. We could see him stumbling up the path, limping to favor his leg.

"He'll go back by the road, I suppose," I said.

Westy and I just sat in the boat watching until we couldn't see him any more. Then he said:

"*Some* scout, hey?"

CHAPTER XXXVII

TELLS ABOUT HOW I VISITED CAMP MC CORD

Of course, everybody in camp said that Bert Winton was a wonder; they couldn't help saying that. His own troop didn't seem to think so much about it. One of them said to me that he guessed Bert was having the time of his life. They were funny in that way—those tigers. They didn't seem to get excited over him at all. None of them went around shouting.

The next morning everybody was talking about Bert. All the time fellows kept going over in boats to see the remains of Nick's Cove, and most all they talked about was Bert. Some of them said, Skinny wasn't worth it—they meant being rescued like that. I could see they all thought that he took the money. Some said he was crazy. Some of them thought he knew about the money and just swam out for that.

The Elks didn't seem to care much. Connie told a fellow that he thought they had a peach, but it turned out to be a lemon. I guess he thought

that was funny. I told Vic Norris about how Bert held Skinny tight and he said Bert was some lemon squeezer. It made me mad and I just walked away.

I don't know what would have happened if Mr. Ellsworth had been there. I guessed he had the money still, because I knew he was called away in a hurry. I didn't know whether he had sent for the cross or not.

I don't know what the directors thought. I guessed maybe they decided not to do anything till Mr. Ellsworth got back. Anyway, Skinny stayed where he was. George Bent—he's in a troop from Washington—told me that Mr. Storer went down to the Hudson early in the morning to see how everything was. I guess maybe he did, because Temple Camp would be responsible for Skinny until he was sent away. George said they gave Mr. Storer a doughnut down there, and that it hurt him. I don't know whether they threw it at him or gave it to him to eat. Either way it might have hurt him. Anyway, I was glad Skinny was away on account of the way the fellows felt about him.

The next afternoon Westy and I hiked down to

see the new camp. I have to admit they had everything fine. Those Gold Dust Twins were older than most of the fellows at camp and now that they had something special to be interested in, I could see that they were pretty game.

"We're going to fight it out on these lines if it takes all summer," that's what one of them said.

And the other one said, "That's us. *Skinny forever!*"

They seemed to be getting a lot of fun out of it anyway. I don't believe either one of them knew much about the gold cross, but they were going to see Skinny win. It was funny to hear them talk about scouting. The big one—the one called Reggie—asked me if we had a badge for dancing. Can you beat that? He said he thought he might make a stab for it. The other one thought that stalking meant picking corn off the stalk. *Good night!*

They seemed to like Bert a lot, but I guess it was Skinny's going over to see them that got them interested. When he asked them *please* to believe in him and not take the money, that was what clinchd it—that's what *I* think. Anyway, that's

what Bert told me. He said that was what started Camp McCord.

Skinny was all bunged up but, oh, boy, you should have seen the scout smile when he saw me. If that smile had been any longer it would have cut his head off. He said he was a hero, and that he had a camp of his own now. Poor little duffer, he didn't mean to be boasting; it was only that funny way he had.

Westy and Bert and I took a little walk and I said, "The only trouble is, suppose we shouldn't get the letter. Maybe the money doesn't belong to the lieutenant. Then what?"

"Well then, we'll find out who it does belong to, that's what," Bert said. "Camp McCord doesn't strike its colors as easily as all that. Mr. What's-his-name back?"

I told him no, Mr. Ellsworth wasn't back yet. Then I said, "Maybe Lieutenant Donnelle was sent away; maybe he had to go to South Africa on account of the League of Nations. I read that the Zulu's were having a war."

"You're a regular Calamity Jane," Bert said; "can't you think of something better than that to worry about?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TELLS ABOUT THE SCOUT PACE

We had it fixed that as soon as I got a letter I would start right down to Camp McCord with it. And, oh, boy, didn't I hang around Administration Shack, where the camp mail was sorted. I guess my patrol thought I was crazy and I bet that robin in the maple tree wondered what had become of me. Gee, you can say I was a Calamity Jane if you want to, but honest, I had Lieutenant Donnelle sent all over the world. One minute I was saying he was dead, and the next minute I was saying he had gone to Russia, and the next minute I was saying the money wasn't his at all. Then I was saying that he'd be mad, because I told Bert about him and wouldn't send any answer at all. Then I'd get to thinking about Bert and that would kind of cheer me up; because he was so sure.

Three days went by and no letter came. Every time they handed me a letter I'd be shaky all over till I saw who it was from, and then I'd just be all

down and out when I'd see it was from my mother or my father. Even the letters with my allowance in didn't make me feel good, so you can see from that how anxious I was.

All the fellows around camp didn't say much about Skinny. They thought he was just a little thief, but anyway, they weren't the kind of fellows to be always talking about it. They had something else to do. They talked a lot about Bert though, and said he was a kind of a crank about Skinny. But anyway, they admitted that he was a hero. Gee, they *had* to do that.

All the while I didn't go down to see Bert, and he didn't come up to camp. I just didn't want to go unless I had the letter. Reggie hiked up one day and wanted to know if he could borrow a pair of smoked glasses. "The fellows here don't smoke," Doc Carson told him. It was a shame to guy him, he was such a nice fellow, but oh, boy, I had to laugh to see him start back with that pair of big auto goggles on. But anyhow, all the fellows admitted that the Gold Dust Twins were all right. They were terrible bunglers when it came to scouting, and they even laughed at themselves; that was the best part of it. But you know what a tin horn sport is. Well, they weren't that, anyway. They

had one of those long fancy brass things with a wax taper to light their camp-fire with; honest, it was a scream. I guess it was used in the parlor at home, to reach the chandelier with.

Well, it got to be Tuesday and no letter came. Oh, wasn't I discouraged. I just started out through the woods, because I didn't want to see anybody. All of a sudden, who should I meet but Pee-wee. He motioned to me to keep still, because he was stalking a hop-toad. Even though I didn't feel much like laughing, I had to laugh.

"Why don't you track an angleworm some day?" I said.

He said, "What's the matter with you lately?"

"Nothing much," I told him.

"You don't hang out with the fellows at all," he said; "we're having a lot of thrilling adventures."

"Thrilling, hey?" I said; and I just had to laugh, because it was the same old Pee-wee with his hair's-breadth escapes and thrilling adventures, and all that stuff.

"Well," I said, "you want to be careful; it's pretty dangerous business stalking hop-toads."

"I came all the way from Catskill scout pace," he said.

I said, "Bully for you."

"I did it in fifty-two minutes," he said; "scout pace is my middle name. Are you worrying about anything?"

"I'm worrying because I don't get a letter, kid," I said; "if it doesn't come to-morrow—"

"Don't you worry," he said; "it'll come to-morrow. I'll fix it for you."

"You're one bully little fixer," I said (because he was always talking about fixing things), but if Uncle Sam doesn't bring it, *you* can't. But, anyway, you and I are going to have a good hike, you little raving Raven," I said; "just as soon as we can. I know I haven't seen much of you, Pee-wee, but it isn't because I don't like you."

He just said, *"Hsh,"* and went off on tiptoe through the woods, stalking his hop-toad. He's a mighty nice little fellow, Pee-wee is. And he's a bully little scout. Scout pace and good turns, those are his specialties. He just stalks hop-toads on the side.

Late that night Mr. Ellsworth came back. The bus brought him up from Catskill. I didn't see him, but early in the morning on my way over to

wait for the mail, I met Vic Norris and Hunt Ward of the Elks.

Vic Norris said, "This'll be the end of Camp McCord. Mr. E. is going to take Skinny to Bridgeboro this morning."

"Oh, is that so?" I said; "Skinny is with the Gold Dust Twins, and they have nothing to do with Temple Camp."

"Skinny is in Mr. Ellsworth's care," Hunt Ward said.

"Pretty soon he'll be in the Reformatory's care," Vic blurted out.

"Yes," I said, "and all because you had his head all turned with swimming, before he's even passed his second class tests. You were glad enough to use him. You were glad enough to see his poor little skinny legs kicking in the water, just so as you could get something out of it. Now you throw him down. Those Gold Dust Twins are better scouts than you are—they are. You're not fit to stay in the same camp with Bert Winton; you're in my own troop, but I tell you that. You leave Mr. Ellsworth out of it."

"Who says so?" Vic shouted.

"I say so," I told him. "You don't hear Mr. Ellsworth around saying mean things about

Skinny, do you? You leave Mr. Ellsworth out of it. It's none of your business what he does. Even if Skinny does go back, the least you can do is keep still about it. You don't hear those tigers around talking, do you? I guess not. Or my patrol either. You keep your mouths shut about Skinny!"

Then I went over to Administration Shack to wait for the mail to be sorted. The reason I didn't say more to Vic and Hunt was just because I was getting discouraged, and in my heart I thought maybe Skinny would have to go. I knew that Camp McCord was no use if Mr. Ellsworth said he must go back.

I was glad I didn't say any more, because anyway, there was no letter there.

CHAPTER XXXIX

TELLS ABOUT HOW CAMP MC CORD DIDN'T STRIKE ITS COLORS

THERE were a lot of us hanging around Administration Shack, and I heard a couple of fellows say that Mr. Ellsworth was going down in the bus to catch the eleven-ten train. They said he was going to stop at Camp McCord for Skinny. "He's likely to get a home-made doughnut thrown at his head," one of them said, and they all laughed. I just couldn't listen to them.

After the mail was distributed and I saw there wasn't anything for me, I just went in and said to Slaty, I said, "Are you *sure* there isn't anything? Would you mind looking again?" I knew it wasn't any use and I guess he did too, but anyway, he looked and said no.

Then I started back to Silver Fox Cabin. I guess I never felt worse than I did then. First I thought I'd just go and beg Mr. Ellsworth not to take Skinny away from Camp McCord, anyway,

even if he couldn't have the cross. I was hanging my head and just kind of wandering along and wondering what I'd say to Bert and the twins. I could just sort of see that new flag with Camp McCord on it, and I could hear Bert saying, "Camp McCord doesn't strike its colors as easily as all that." Anyway, what more could I do. I knew Mr. Ellsworth would be nice to me, but that he wouldn't do anything just because *I* wanted him to. I said to myself, "It's all up; nobody can do anything now. Skinny was born unlucky—poor little kid—"

All of a sudden I stumbled plunk into Pee-wee as he came pell-mell around the corner of the big pavilion.

"What in—" I began.

"I've got it for you! I've got it for you!" he shouted; "forty-nine minutes, scout pace! *I beat my record!* I thought maybe it wouldn't come in the reg—in the reg—in the reg—" He was so out of breath he couldn't talk.

"There's a sec—there's a sec—there's a second train; here—"

And then he handed me a letter.

"There—there are—two," he said; "this—one's—for you."

My hand trembled so I could hardly open the envelope. And, honest, I could hardly speak to him. I just blurted out, "Pee-wee, you're the bulliest little scout in this camp—you and your scout pacing! You're just the best little scout that ever was. Give me your hand, you bully little raving Raven. Talk about good turns! Oh, Pee-wee, you're just—"

Honest, I couldn't finish. And I stood there with my eyes all sort of wet, and watched him start up again scout pace.

"See you later," he called back; "I want to make Administration Shack in fifty minutes."

That was him all over.

This was the letter and, oh, boy, you bet I'll always keep it, because that was my lucky day. Even since then, Wednesday has been my lucky day. When I get a good stalking snapshot it's always on a Wednesday.

> Skeezeks, old Pal:
>
> Yours received. Have sent letter to your superior officer or whatever you call him. Will be up after my two hundred buckarinos next week. Could you put me up for a couple of nights? I'll show you how to

roast potatoes French style, and we'll have a hike.

Everything O.K., so don't worry. You're a little brick.

In a hurry,

H. D.

Believe me, I read that letter about seven times. But even then I wouldn't go to see Mr. Ellsworth, because I wanted to wait till the other letter was sent over to him from the shack. I guess I waited about half an hour, because I wanted to give him a chance to read his seven times too. Then I went to his tent where I knew he'd be getting ready to start away.

I just said kind of sober like, "Can I take your grip over to the bus for you, Mr. Ellsworth?"

Oh, boy, you ought to have seen him.

"Guess you'll have to root around and find another good turn for to-day, Roy," he said; "something has happened."

I just said very sober like (because I'm not afraid of him), "Did Skinny take any more money?"

He said, "Here, read this, you little Silver Fox, and then clear out and give me a chance to get my wits together. You're right and I'm wrong as you

usually are—I mean as I usually am—I don't know what I mean. Here, read this and then let's see your scout smile—you little rascal!"

This is how the letter read:

Mr. E. C. Ellsworth,
Temple Camp.
Dear Sir:—

May I ask you to go to the trouble of forcing open the second locker in my father's house-boat and rescuing a sum of money which I carelessly left there? I think you will find it in an old pair of trousers belonging to me. The amount is a little over two hundred dollars. I would greatly appreciate it if you will hold this in safe keeping till I have a chance to visit your camp. I hope you will not consider that I am presuming upon a very slight acquaintance, in asking you to do me this service.

Sincerely yours,
Lieutenant Harry C. Donnelle.
Stationed at Camp Dix,
Wrightstown, N. J.

Oh, boy, I wish I could tell you about everything. I don't know what Mr. Ellsworth told the Elks. I should worry about that. He knew how to handle them, you can bet. Oh, bibbie, but he's

one peachy scoutmaster! Pretty soon everybody in camp was talking, but I didn't pay any attention. A fellow from Virginia came up and told me they were going to have the spring-board fixed. What do you know about that? I said, "Get out from under and don't bother me; I have something else to think about."

I didn't eat much dinner; maybe you won't believe it, but I didn't. Right afterward I started down to the Hudson. I saw a woodchuck's tracks, but I didn't bother with them. I should worry about woodchucks. I didn't even stop in the village to have a soda. I got some ice cream in a paper, so I could eat it going along. And, oh, boy, when I saw that new flag in among the trees, didn't I just shout! *Camp McCord,* it said, in big red letters. Oh, they were dandy fellows, those Gold Dust Twins. Then I thought of what Bert said about Camp McCord not striking its colors. I noticed they didn't have their door to the south, but anyway, that didn't matter. The north is all right—sometimes.

I just went running in there pell mell.

"Hurrah for Camp McCord," I shouted. "You were right about not striking your colors, but I'll strike you, all right, you old Bengal Tiger!" And

I gave Bert Winton a thump that nearly knocked him over. Good night!

"Don't you know enough to have your door open to the south or east or west—what's the difference?" I just yelled. "Hurrah! Lieutenant Donnelle is coming to get his two hundred and I'm going to make him stay till Skin—I mean Alfred —gets the cross. Three cheers for the Gold Dust Twins! And anybody who says—"

"Just a minute," Bert said; "calm down. You're talking in chunks."

"Why shouldn't I talk in chunks, I'd like to know?" I said.

Then I told them all about it.

"It's going to be just as you said," I told them; "we're going to make the Elks come down here and give him the cross—when it comes. Mr. Ellsworth says all right. Oh, but he was fine about it. He said it's only fair. Isn't he some scoutmaster? But you don't have to be in the scouts—"

The fellow they called Reggie just came over and put his hand over my shoulder, awful nice. "Yes, you do," he said; "you have to be in the scouts. We won't hear any talk against the scouts here."

Oh, but he was one fine fellow; I don't care if

he didn't know anything about digging a drain ditch and all that. But anyway, I just can't tell you all we said.

And one thing, you should have seen Skinny. That's all I've got to say—you ought to have seen him.

After a little while, when the rumpus was over, Bert and I walked over to the shore of the river and sat down and just looked across at Catskill and the big hills in back. I kind of felt as if I'd like to be alone with him a little while.

I said, "You did it all, Bert. The whole camp is crazy about you."

"Those campers are bully scouts," he said.

I said, "Yes, but *you*—if it wasn't for *you*—"

"If it wasn't for Pee-wee, Skinny would be on that train," he said.

We listened and could hear the West Shore train coming along and could see the smoke blowing away into the mountains. It seemed as if that train didn't care for anything or anybody. Pretty soon it would be in the hot city and the people on it would go through big gates and across in ferries and up the streets all filled with people. And everything would be hot and stuffy.

But Skinny wouldn't be on it.

We saw it stop at the station in Catskill and we heard the bell ring and saw it start again and go scooting along the shore and far away, till we couldn't see it any more. Only the smoke.

But anyway, Skinny wasn't on it.

"Kind of, as you might say, Pee-wee can even beat a train—going scout pace," I said.

"It'll go winding and turning in and out along the shore," Bert said; "but Pee-wee can beat it on good turns."

"Yop," I said.

After that we didn't say anything for about five minutes.

Then I said, "One thing sure; *you* ought to get the gold cross."

He didn't say anything, only broke a stick off a bush and began marking on the grass with it.

"What do I want with the cross?" he said.

"It's a big honor," I told him.

"Sure," he said.

"You deserve it for what you did," I told him; "you ought to *want* it—you ought to want to have it—on account of your patrol."

"Nice fellows, eh?" he said.

"Well then, why don't you take more interest in it for *their* sake?"

"Ever notice how blue the Hudson is above Poughkeepsie?" he said.

I didn't say anything, just looked at the river. Then all of a sudden a thought came to me.

I said, "Bert, you've got the cross already—haven't you? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Dunno—didn't think of it, I guess," he said.

"Tell me how you won it, Bert," I said; *"please* tell me."

But he just kept poking around with the stick and wouldn't tell me.

"Look at that worm," he said; and he held one up on his stick. "Good fishing bait around here, hey? What d'ye say we go back?"

That was just like him—*just exactly like him.*

THE END

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